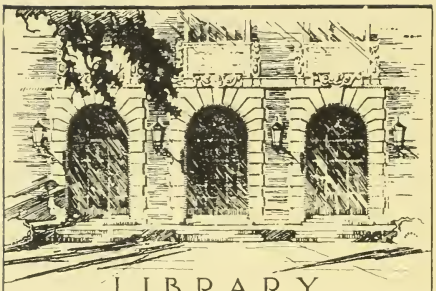

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WALLACE;

OR,

THE DAYS OF SCOTLAND'S THRALDOM:

A Romance.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"We read of one right famous of renown,
Of worthly blood, that reigned in this region,
And henceforth now I will my process hold
Of William Wallace, as ye have heard it told."
BLIND HARRY.

VOLUME II.

ADAM & CHARLES BLACK, EDINBURGH:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS, LONDON.

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CHAPTER I.

I was born so high! our eyry buildeth
In the cedar-top, and dallies with the wind.
Shakespeare.

THE consternation excited at Lanark by the confirmed accounts of the battle of Allanton, was exceeded by that which prevailed in the garrison at Ayr when the straggling and dispirited remains of the discomfited host appeared in the castle court. The Lord Governor was shut up for hours in conference with Featherstone, and in preparing and sending off dispatches to the various parts of Scotland, as well as to the Sovereign, whose imperious temper he well knew would receive the news with a burst of passion which would be felt even in Ayr. Piercy saw that a crisis was at hand, and that this success would lead to more extensive and important risings; while, with the caution which

characterized him, he warned the several rulers of districts, and entreated that all the men who could be spared might be sent westward without delay, that quarter being the most unsettled and under the influence of Wallace. He had taken care to warn Edward before of the feeling which prevailed in his district, and to beg that reinforcements might be sent to him; and this caution on his part being neglected by his Sovereign, might the more inflame the peculiar temper of the latter, who would fret and fume exactly in proportion to the blame that was attachable to himself.

On the other hand, the news of the successful combat was as the warning note of a trumpet to many of the Scottish people; and while Piercy exerted himself to concentrate the Southron forces on the western counties, the barons and chief men of all sorts, in the latter, began secretly to hold meetings for the purpose of concerting measures in support of Wallace. Among these, the potent Knight of Douglasdale was the most prominent, for he almost openly held his weapon-shawings or musterings, and communicated with the cham-

pion. Sir Andrew Murray of Bothwell, too, a a powerful baron of Lanarkshire, almost threw off the disguise he had formerly worn, and those chiefs being in the neighbourhood of Lanark, sadly perplexed and annoyed Heselrig by the evasive answers which they returned to the various calls he made on them to come forward in aid of his authority, threatened by Wallace on one side and the Lesmahagow outlaws on the other, while his spies continually brought reports of their gatherings.

In the meantime, Wallace and Angus held free communication with each other, and co-operated in all their proceedings. The energies of both had been directed to the discovery of the place in which Marion was immured; but all their attempts to procure information at the Castle were foiled by the vigilance of Heselrig, till Wallace entered in the disguise of a priest, from the Monastery of Lesmahagow, and learned, from the confession of a sick yeoman, who had been engaged in the Cumnock expedition, and had committed some trespass against one of his comrades, which he thought required absolution, that the lady was actually there.

Wallace, rendered desperate by the failure of his other attempts, had been forced to assume this disguise as the only safe one; and in his new character had been seized on by the yeoman's friends to confess him—an act of impiety which his well-regulated mind revolted from, but which he could not escape. Whilst he made this discovery, he also became aware of the great strength of the Castle, and its powerful garrison, and the hopeless nature of any attack upon it by open assault. From the time that he had heard of Marion's capture, his features had worn a stern and fixed expression of melancholy and determination blended; and he kept aloof from all such scenes of sylvan amusement as his followers delighted in, and in which, at other times, he had ever been one of the most eager and most proficient. It was said also, by this yeoman, that the lady was ill of some complaint which the Castle leech did not understand; and the Sheriff had dispatched messengers to Glasgow for another. On receiving this information, Wallace departed hastily, and in increased anxiety.

Angus of Cumnock was now at the head of a numerous but not disciplined band, and Wallace had taken care to place under him some tried men, whose sage and wary conduct might keep somewhat in check the irregularities arising out of Angus's peculiar state of mind, without offending him. His eccentricities broke out chiefly against the lairds in the vicinity, who had the reputation of using ill their dependents; one of them especially afforded some amusement to Wallace, and great mirth to his men. On the skirt of the forest which he occupied, dwelt a certain gentleman of high family, as he himself gave out, but so indistinctly allied, that it was said the great lord who bore his name and represented the race was altogether ignorant of his existence. This gentleman, Fulke de Brito by name, had earned an odious reputation by the severity with which he treated the few serfs on his small domain. He was one of those men, frequently met with in the world, who carry their noses so high in the air, that they can see no man who is not above them. Fulke disdained to look on one who was only his equal, for he ever ranked himself

with the very salt of the earth, the great owners of the land, although, being less than the younger son of a younger brother, his having in that commodity was less than a younger brother's portion.

Fulke de Brito was one day perambulating his estate of one hundred and fifty acres, attended by his land-steward or farm overseer, as he might be called, and in their round they came upon a villein engaged in ploughing, according to the fashion of the day, with four oxen, while another followed depositing the grain on the whole of the upturned earth, instead of carefully lodging it in the the furrow alone, which was the general practice ; and we may infer from this that the serf was an improver. The alteration, however, caught the sharp eye of the overseer, who instantly called out, " How now, unthrifty knave ! why dost thou so scatter the good grain, instead of placing it, as thou shouldest, in the furrow alone ! "

" It is a better fashion than the old one, so please you, and followed by the good monks of Lesmahagow, who learned the art, men say, from the great Earl of Pembroke when he was in these parts ; and

other high men also do use the practice on their lands."

"It may suit rich lords to waste their seed as thou sayest, but thou hast no authority for so doing here, and thou must keep to the former method."

"Thou art in the wrong, Robson; the serf hath a truer sense of what is right than thou. Certes, if other men of high nobility do the work in that way, it is proper that, on the territory of De Brito, it should be so done," said the landlord, with a lofty air.

The overseer merely shook his head in reply.

"And thine oxen have been neglected, sirrah," said the latter, again addressing the sower; "why, their bones are sticking almost through their skins."

"The poor juments," answered the man, pale from fear, "are ill fed, by reason of the outlaws in the wood, for we dare not trust them close to it, and so the pasture is limited."

"Darest thou insinuate, slave, that an outlaw would venture to take cattle from this domain?" asked De Brito.

The man cast a look at the steward, while it was evident that he, the ploughman, and the boy, who, with a long rod having a short spike at the end, acted as goadsman, were under the influence of terror. The steward, who was a surly fellow, and irritated because the mode of sowing was changed without his knowledge, told his master that one ox had already disappeared, which they declared had been taken by the wild foresters; "but, for my part," said he, "I doubt not the serfs know better what hath become of it."

"So help us all the saints!" exclaimed they at once, "we did all we could to save it, but they drove it off before our eyes."

The rage of De Brito knew no bounds. "What! lying knaves! do ye tell your lord that a base outlaw would presume to harry his lands? They are thieves and traitors; have them to the stocks when their work is over; they must be flogged within an inch of their lives."

"Forgive us, master," said they, bending their knees, and looking piteously at him; "the steward knoweth we say sooth."

"I know! lying knave!" cried the latter, pretending to get into a passion, and striking the speaker forcibly with his staff till the poor man cried out in agony, while his lord looked on with scornful indifference. They were within a couple of hundred paces of the woods when this happened, and at the first cry uttered, a man issued from it, and advanced hastily towards the group.

It was Angus in his garb of skins, and he had approached close to them before he was observed.

"Jesu! what is here," cried De Brito, starting back with astonishment. "The outlaw Chief!" exclaimed the serfs, standing back in fear, for they knew nothing of the real character of their silvan neighbours. De Brito laid his hand upon his sword, and looking round, bethought himself of high rewards offered, and honours in prospect; then, seeing no other near, he drew it from the scabbard, and called on Angus to surrender. The latter smiled strangely, as he inquired to whom.

"To Fulke de Brito," answered the other, as if he thought the words sufficient to bring him to his knee.

"Ay! that is the name of the yeoman to whom this farm pertaineth," said Angus; "and thou must be he."

"Yeoman! farm! thou art but a savage, and knowest nought of rank and nobility. Yeoman! yield thee, outlaw robber, or thou diest by my hand!" So saying, he caused his weapon to whistle round his head, in a manner terrible to behold; but Angus, so far from shewing fear, leisurely drew his sword, and advanced on the great man, very much to the surprise and, it may be, alarm of the latter, whose blade was stricken from his hand ere he wist what he was about.

"Now stand still, and you also," cried Angus in a stern tone to the serfs and the steward, while he blew a note on his horn; and presently some twenty or thirty of his followers were around him. "Now, Sir Brito, or whatever thy name may be, thou shalt experience a little of free foresters' justice. Thou hast tyrannized over thy poor people in a most unmerciful manner, which is known to all here present. We have witnessed also the cruelty of thy tool at this moment, and we

are resolved to take the law into our hands. What hast thou to say for thyself?"

De Brito, now pale and trembling, his lofty look supplanted by one of abject submission, replied, still with characteristic pride, "that he was akin to the Lord Piercy, and any evil done towards him would be avenged."

"Is it even so? It may be false, for thou art but a paltry knave and a base braggart, and yet it may be true; but in either case, thou shalt abide with me in the greenwood as hostage for one who is in the power of this Piercy and his underling. Thou canst be but an inadequate hostage for one so far superior, yet something may come of it; and now my friends, take this cowardly and cruel steward, who fled from you when you took the ox yesterday so basely, and beat this better man than himself so fiercely to-day; take him, and with his own staff, punish him till he is one ache from head to heel!"

His commands were obeyed to the letter, amidst the merriment of his followers, the roaring of the steward, and the stupefaction and amazement

of Fulke de Brito; and when the punishment was finished, they left Robson stretched on the ground, but in no danger of losing his life, and taking laird and serfs with them, returned to their own wild domain.

This was not the only laird whom he had requited for cruelty; but those who enjoyed the character of just and humane persons were respected by him, in their cattle and goods as well as persons, unless they were understood to be staunch adherents of the English party, in which case he looked on them as fair prey. In this he was supported by Wallace, whose policy it was to make the enemy furnish the requisite supplies for his men, in the absence of all funds for that purpose; and it was warranted as much by precedent as justice and necessity, which he, who knew the practices of antiquity, was doubtless well acquainted with. Wallace was constantly receiving additions to his force, and in the centre of the forest, while the booty taken at Allanton lasted, they needed no provisions, and therefore kept quiet in their secret places. His principal men were always

engaged in training to the schiltron and the bow the followers of all sorts who constituted the band, and who were generally at first indifferently armed and taught, being chiefly serfs. The arms taken after the battle were of immense advantage to them, and the friendly barons were constantly adding to the quantity, by voluntary contributions.

CHAPTER II.

For the first time Count Harold owns leech-craft hath power,
Or his courage to aid lacks the juice of a flower:
He asked for the casket that Walwayn had filled,
With the juice of wild roots that his art had distilled.
Harold the Dauntless.

THE illness of Marion arose from the unusual restraint under which she was kept, and which, even without the distress of mind incidental to one in her position, was a change so great from her free and unrestricted course, on hill and lee, as almost unavoidably to derange the functions of life. The monk, who acted both as chaplain and physician in the Castle, without any pretence to knowledge in either department, declared that her symptoms were uncommon, and altogether beyond the range of his practice; and Heselrig, becoming really alarmed for her life, lost no time in sending to

other quarters for some more skilful mediciner, and one came forthwith; but although he did not acknowledge it, he was at a loss to know the nature of her disease; the patient shewing no sign of amendment after he had been two days with her.

Heselrig's impatience was extreme. "Canst thou tell me, Folkham," enquired he of his 'Squire, "if there is really any thing strange or very bad in the sickness of this damsel—what saith her woman?"

"She doth cry much," replied Folkham; "but she can say no more than the leech, that it is a fever in the blood, which hath taken her head, and doth cause her to rave of green hills and pure streams, and such like vagaries."

"Doth this leech yet promise no amendment?"

"He cannot prognosticate, I think he doth call it. There is a bruit in the town of a man who hath come there to cure a tailor's wife, that he hath shewn marvellous skill—"

"Bring him! Heaven be praised! We must try every thing to save her, in respect of her

forlorn condition, thou knowest, Folkham," cried Heselrig with a grin, responded to by the other with a similar grimace; while the words, "respect of her broad lands," fell from him unheard by his lord.

Folkham retired, and in less than half an hour returned with the physician of whom he had spoken. He was a man apparently of middle age, with hair and beard of glossy black, and bushy eye-brows of the same colour. His aspect was gloomy and forbidding, whilst he shot, occasionally, from his grey eyes very piercing glances.

Heselrig surveyed him in silence for a full minute. "Whence art thou?" enquired he.

"Last from Glasgow."

"Where hast thou learned thine art?"

"At various places. The true student, Sir Knight, is not limited to place in acquiring the secrets of art."

"But seest thou not, I must have proof that thou art no impostor, ere thou canst be allowed to prescribe for a noble lady."

"What thou sayest may be true; I too have

secrets as well as nobler men, which may not be disclosed. The burghers of Lanark can attest my knowledge of medicine, and my life is in thy hands, Sir Sheriff. If aught doth go wrong in default of me, thou mayest deal with me according to your pleasure."

"Thou art confident, then," said Heselrig, eyeing his steadfast countenance; "go, Folkham, announce our coming to the lady's woman." They entered the apartment where the helpless Marion lay stretched on her bed (watched by Dora with an anxious look), the flush and the phrenzy of fever on her cheek and in her eye. The physician, whose name was Galbraith, advanced slowly to the bed, and, fixing an earnest gaze on her face, put his finger to the pulse,—"Quick, quick, fluttering; the heart is oppressed; nature hath not her own free course here. I pray you," enquired he of Heselrig, "hath there been change in her mode of living, or anything in her way of life to which she hath been unused?"

"There hath," replied the latter, briefly, inwardly thinking this a proof of the doctor's skill.

After a long and careful enquiry, they left the apartment.

"Well," asked Heselrig, "what sayest thou?"

"The lady is grievously ill, my lord, and her life is doubtless in jeopardy."

"Save her, and thy fee shall be far beyond thy hopes," said Heselrig, anxiously.

"I pray you, let me consult with my brother, ere I converse farther on the subject," answered the other; and Heselrig consented with reluctance. The consultation lasted long, and ended in the promulgation of orders to continue the same medicaments till next day, aided by some trivial additions, suggested by Galbraith, much to the disappointment of the impatient Sheriff, who would gladly have thrust the first forth of the gates, because he had not already cured his patient. The other agreed to remain also, only on condition that he should have an apartment solely for his own use, which, in the crowded state of the castle, was inconvenient; but Heselrig was impressed by the manner of the man, and he believed there was something uncommon about him, so he got one of

the turrets, where he might be as solitary and studious as he listed. The next day both physicians declared there were symptoms of improvement.

"Nature," said Galbraith, "doth begin to assert her power over disease. Dost thou not so think, my brother?"

"Yea, verily," replied the other, who was a solemn old man; "there hath been a hard fight—both combatants eager for the prize; and that last febrifuge I threw in hath been as a knock-down blow to the enemy of life."

"Rather say the bathing of her head and temples, with that precious embrocation which I invented, and which hath never failed, doth scare away the foe," replied Galbraith, very gravely.

"Thou dost me wrong, stranger," cried the old man, angrily, "the lady would have been better without thy fusionless washes."

"Pooh; thou art vain, old man."

"And thou art impertinent," answered the other, in a rage, while he flung out of the apartment.

Folkham was within ear-shot of this consultation, which he reported instantly to his master,

who perceived that the new leech must be the true one, as his embrocation had operated immediately, while the first had prescribed in vain for two days. When the old man entered therefore, as he expected, to say he would stay no longer in the same house with the other, he gave him his honorarium and his congé at once. Galbraith thus introduced, succeeded in restoring the lady and in gaining the entire confidence of Heselrig, to whom, in a short space, he became confidential adviser as well as physician. Whether the singular celerity with which he ingratiated himself thus with the lord of the castle, was justified by his success in the healing art, or rather originated in a sort of instinctive feeling on the part of Heselrig that he had met a kindred spirit in the stranger thus fortuitously cast upon him, we shall discover by and by.

On the day after the departure of the old physician, Galbraith pronounced his patient much better. "She is now," said he to Heselrig, "enjoying a balmy sleep, the first for many days, and she will awake free from the fever." Two hours

afterwards, while her affectionate maid was bending over her in anxious suspense, watching the abated quickness of breathing, and the repose which reigned in every feature, with wondering hope, the eyes of Marion opened slowly upon her, and she gazed with a bewildered look in her face. "How is it with you, blessed lady?—speak to your own faithful Dora. O speak!"

"Is it really thou, Dora?" replied Marion, in a voice so weak as scarcely to be heard.

But at the sound, that grateful creature exclaimed, "Now God and all his saints be lauded ever, and blest be the good physician (she added) though his looks be dark as midnight! Dear lady! these are the first words of sense you have spoken for a week."

"What hath ailed me, Dora?" said she, raising her head and trying to look round. Methought I was with mine own Wallace Wight in the merry greenwood, and trusty Cormack near. Alas!—we are still pent up in this dreary hold; but I am weary, and fain would sleep again."

"First take this draught which the best of

leeches left for you, dearest lady." Dora then, in a flutter of delight, administered the medicine, and composed her to sleep.

She herself had scarcely enjoyed an hour's repose during the tedious illness of her mistress, and with a mind relieved, nature's claim on her was asserted with such force, that when Galbraith came to visit his patient some hours afterwards, he had to knock long and loudly, both being fast asleep on the same bed, ere he could be admitted. Marion gazed on the striking countenance of the Leech. She could ill reconcile his forbidding aspect with the beneficent effect of his prescription. When he had made his enquiries, he addressed her in a gentle soothing tone—" The fever hath lost its hold on thee, gentle lady, and thou wilt soon be well; some cordials and good broths will restore the strength that hath been lost, and set thee up again in health and beauty."

" Again to be wasted in the foul air of this weary hold; no, Sir Leech. If thou wouldst make me well, thou must restore me to the winds of hea-

ven and the fair green sward, to which I have been used from early youth."

"Even so much can I do; for I have represented to Sir Arthur Heselrig the cause of thine illness; and ever indulgent as he is, he will accord ample space for free and salutary exercise; but talk no more at present, rest and repose are needing to aid Nature in thy restoration."

She looked up in his face, and a spark of her former spirit flashed from her eye at the mention of Heselrig's name; but it vanished instantly, and, like a child in the hands of its mother, she turned and closed her eyes in sleep.

Goin directly to Heselrig, Galbraith gave him the welcome tidings of the fair lady's recovery, at which he rejoiced exceedingly.

"Thou hast shewn thyself a skilful Leech, and thy guerdon shall be in accordance with the service thou hast rendered; but say what is now thy purpose."

"My poor services are at your disposal, Lord Sheriff, here or elsewhere."

"Then remain with us; deeds are toward, which

may have results demanding the aid of wise and learned men in thy profession. Thy turret shall continue thine alone, unmolested by any one."

Thanks for this bounty," replied the physician, " I am still an ardent student, and the chamber is lone and quiet, fit for one like me; but there is yet a request which the kindness of your lordship doth embolden me to make. I must, both in the study and the practice of mine art, be diligent in the gathering of simples, either that I may discover the yet hidden mysteries of nature in them, or administer their qualities, in so far as these have been divulged, to unfortunates who lack mine aid."

Heselrig's brow darkened at this hint, for he was a wary and cautious commander. " Men are not allowed to go and come here, except with my special license. Mark me! thou art yet unknown; and although I do not think thou canst play the part of espial, I shall be deemed hardly wise to trust a stranger with free egress or ingress, in a time of such peril. Thou dost seem surprised, and mayest deem me over careful; but thou shalt

not leave the Castle, if thou art to remain, without permission from me, which thou mayest obtain in suitable hours."

The Leech bowed low, when he replied, " Assuredly, I did not think of the construction which might be put on my request—so little are men of science accustomed to think of measures which relate to a time of war; but I see that I was wrong and unreasonable; therefore I shall not ask the passport, even for an hour, until I am better known."

" Thou dost wisely therein; doubt not in time thou shalt have license enough, if thy conduct shall justify the good opinion I incline to have of thee, in every thing as well as thy calling."

Heselrig here mused a little. " Those mysterious and concealed powers, which are contained in the simplest forms of nature, are, if the tales of men deeply versed in them may be believed, manifold and wonderful, even over the minds and passions of the human race."

" They are so. In our strangely constructed forms, the body is to be wrought on through the

mind; and herbs that move the passions, and excite the feelings, are frequently those which disease doth require; not the grosser medicaments which act immediately on the body."

"Thine is a strange and a fearful art; for, if rightly learned, it gives thee power even over the actions of others."

"It doth, in so far as these actions originate in the passions, and man is under their impulse."

"Canst thou now, for example, work on the affections, so as to divert them to a particular object?"

"In some cases, doubtless."

"Well," said Heselrig, "we must discourse no longer at present; but I love to converse with men like thee, and we shall renew our conversation at some fitter opportunity."

For several days, the Leech, saving when he visited his patient, was shut up in the turret, deeply engaged with his books, of which he had many; and no one ventured to intrude on him, for his lowering brows, and grave deportment, together with the fame of his great skill in leechcraft, and vast know-

ledge regarding everything, tended to throw about him an air of mystery, which gradually wrought on the superstitious feeling of the garrison, until it was soon and generally believed that the Black Leech was uncanny, or, in other words, next to a wizard. But it was remarked, that the Lady Marion and her woman never seemed to be under the influence of this feeling; for they received him with evident pleasure and satisfaction, and he increased daily in the favours and good opinion of the Sheriff, who often talked long and earnestly with him, taking care to avoid, of course, all matters of public import, which the Leech knew and cared nothing about.

Wallace, under all the circumstances by which he was surrounded, which were sufficient to unhinge an ordinary mind, preserved a degree of composure and self-possession, that was the admiration of his friends. He had to concert measures for meeting the great force, which he knew well was preparing, in various quarters, to hunt him out of his sequestered abode. His trusty emissaries were continually going, from one friendly baron to another, urg-

ing them to muster their men, hold privately their weapon-shawings, and be ready at short notice to repair to the rendezvous. And, while these most important considerations weighed on his mind, he was obliged to employ another, and a more dexterous set of scouts, to gain information regarding the proceedings in Lanark Castle, and the health of her who was dearest to him. These were unable to penetrate beyond the gates of her prison-house; but in Lanark they had secret friends, and, through them, they soon learned the news of her recovery by means of the new physician, of whom they knew nothing except that he was a man who had come last from Glasgow, and had been over many parts of the world, and was thought to know more than a good man should.

Wallace felt grateful for his kindness to Marion; but he was conscious of a strange misgiving, unusual to him, when the description given of this man by his friends brought his appearance fully before him. He could not help thinking that two such forms as his and Heselrig's, so much alike in their repulsive character, must be endowed also

with minds and dispositions akin to each other; and he feared the combination of such persons acting to circumvent and bend to their wishes a very young woman, without any one to assist and support her but a simple country maiden, as ignorant of the world as an infant. He could only trust in the event of the next battle, which, it was evident, must be fought ere many weeks passed; for such was the jealous vigilance of Heselrig, both on account of the state of the nation, and the fair prize whom he chose to seclude from all eyes, that any attempt by stratagem to effect her escape, or even to communicate with her, was utterly hopeless. Still keeping his faithful emissaries actively engaged in ferreting out information about the town, he directed all his energies to needful preparations for meeting the Southrons, not alone as essential to the success of the patriotic cause, but as the only means of forwarding his private ends.

He saw that nothing was to be expected from the justice of the Governor, for he was so disturbed by the rebellious condition of his district, that he could give no thought to any mere individual affair;

and if, by chance, the idea of this damsel presented itself, it was only as a guest of Heselrig's, under some restraint certainly, which was no more than the daughter of one who had ever been the enemy of English domination deserved; and, besides, she could be safe nowhere else from the lawless Jardines. But, indeed, the Lord Piercy, chidden by his imperious master for slackness in the discharge of his duty, and wounded in his most sensitive part by the degradation which he thought this had brought on him, in the estimation of his countrymen, had no inclination to take the part of one so little influential, at such a crisis, or to incur the risk of disquieting a knight of such prowess and leading as the Sheriff of Lanark.

Thus was the hapless Marion, in every way, under the power of her captor, and subject to his evil machinations, which, she never doubted, would commence, sooner or later, against her, for she saw, from the beginning, that Heselrig hoped to win her affections, in ignorance of her being the betrothed of the one he hated most; and when this

fact became known, she expected he would change his line of conduct.

In the progress which Galbraith made in gaining the good opinion of all in the Castle, nothing was more striking than the friendship which sprang up rapidly between him and Folkham, who, having a vast fund of credulity, and a great craving after the marvellous, found, in the new Leech, a subject well qualified to make an impression on the former, and to gratify the latter.

"I pray you," said he, to the physician one day, on meeting him in the gallery, into which the apartments of the Lady Marion opened, "pause a little from thy studies, and come with me to partake a flagon of good wine. Thou art too ascetic."

"Nay, my friend, I love not wine; in good sooth, we are opposed to each other; for, thou mayest see, I am the friend, and wine is the enemy of life."

"How can that be, Master Leech, seeing that I and every other man will have his strength doubled by a good cup? By St Mungo, thou shalt

not come over me with such a tale!" said the 'Squire.

"A little harmeth not; but much doth cause evil."

"Go to! Thou art like the priest who doth think he must hold forth against aught that is agreeable. If a little be good, won't much be better, aha?"

"Thou shalt not find it so, friend Folkham, and thy argument is naught. Put thy hand to the fire when cold biteth, and the heat is pleasant; put it closer, even into it, and it is destroyed. Aha!" replied the physician, imitating the knowing look of the other.

Folkham shook his head. "By the Mass!" said he, "I cannot talk to thee; thou art even beyond me in all knowledge, save of one thing, and that, Heaven be praised, is all that is required by a gentleman and man-at-arms!"

"The trade of killing thou dost mean. Certes, thou art superior to me in it. My life is spent in learning to preserve what thou hast been all thy days studying to annihilate."

"Well, well, a truce with this—how doth the pretty damsel?"

"Still better; she doth mend apace, and must soon, weather permitting, be out on the battlements, and, it may be, out to the Castle chase."

Folkham looked grave. "Hath my lord accorded this permission?"

"Surely; he hath been truly assured by me that it is necessary to her health."

"It is riskful, natheless."

"In what respect? Doth not the chase and the wide country round belong to the lord of this castle?"

"Thou sayest true; harkye, Leech; I think I dare trust thee, and I do long to have some one that I can converse freely with."

"Thou surely mayest; thou hast the best security. To whom could I reveal this conversation, when there is none besides thee almost in this garrison whom I know?"

They sat down close to each other, and Folkham, glancing cautiously round, thus addressed his friend. "What I am going to tell thee is known

perhaps to scarcely any other here, and I would not be the man to speak of it to Sir Arthur of Heselrig, nor would I that he knew I spoke of it to any one. Two years have now passed since there dwelt, some leagues south of this, a goodly baron, with three fair sons and one beauteous daughter. The old man had ever been a bold and open enemy of our King; the elder Heselrig, then ruler here, was foiled in every attempt to conciliate him, or the family of which he was the head, and, becoming irritated at the obstinacy, or rather the rebellious spirit of the Scot, he took every opportunity to harass and annoy him. On the other side of the hill on which his castle stood is the country of a clan, notorious for their ceaseless and enduring love of their neighbours' goods—reivers, to wit—like other border men. Sir Henry of Heselrig, becoming more and more enraged at Lammington—such was his name—sends a 'squire of his household with fair and friendly greeting to the Jardine Chief, a known supporter of our brave English cause, and I wot not what paction was made between them, but certain it is, a feud was

revived which had slumbered for years, and Birnok, the Chief's nephew, with half his clan, made a midnight raid into the lands of Lammington, burnt the castle, and, in the fight which took place, slew the old man and his three sons, but the daughter escaped to the wild uplands of Kyle, where she had kindred. My old lord, Sir Henry, gained credit for so happily quenching the fire of rebellion, and our good King graciously acknowledged his services; and Birnok, for his valourous deed, was to have the hand of the lady whom he had made an heiress, when she could be found. So matters continued till lately, when this Jardine, ever embroiled as he was in quarrels, was slain in another raid. Sir Arthur of Heselrig is then offered, by his kind friend the Lord Governor, the fair heiress, and by some means she was found, and is now here."

Folkham told his tale with some appearance of feeling, which seemed to surprise and displease the Leech. "And doth not the demoiselle rejoice at her good fortune? By Apollo! there are few who would reject so stately and valiant a knight."

"She is perverse; perverse, certes, and doth deserve no pity; yet she is tender, young, and very fair."

"Poh! thou art not such a fool as to have compassion on her," cried Galbraith, his brow darkening till it scowled like midnight.

"No, no," replied Folkham, "thou dost altogether misunderstand me. I did think that thou thyself, from the interest thou didst take in her, had some feeling for the damsel. But what care I about her? She is but a Scot, and fair game for any good Englishman."

"Now thou dost speak sensibly. Know that I am careful of her, as she is thy lord's property, and in no other light; were she a valuable serf, it were the same. But wherefore dost thou dread evil from license to this lady to walk or ride in the chase?"

"Marry, our chase is bordered by forests on every side, which contain, on the one hand, the rude men of Kyle and Carrick, and, on the other, the crew of the fell and English hating Wallace;

at the head of the one band is the damsel's uncle, and ruling the other is her betrothed lover."

"Ha! sayest thou so? Then that is thy secret."

"Even so; I learned the fact in Lanark from a paltry burgher, whom strong ale had robbed of discretion; for these linsey-wolsey knaves are, in their hearts, and to a man, favourers of the outlaws. But I care not about telling the fact to Sir Arthur; for there would be high storming, and little choice of words: yet he must know it, and I doubt me it will fare worse then with our captive, or guest, whatever she may be called"

"And dost thou imagine she will keep her plighted troth to Wallace, heedless alike of Sir Arthur's favour or his power?"

"Never doubt it; she is one of those women who lose the characteristics of their sex, and turn men, and bold ones, in emergency."

"Aye, a brave damsel, by my faith! She will be hard sted and well tried before she gets rid of him, thou mayest be assured, my friend."

"Sir Arthur hath a violent passion for her per-

son, and one nearly as strong for her lands; so doubtless he will do all he can to secure both."

"And he shall not lack the assistance which art can give him."

After some conversation on these mysterious subjects which captivated Folkham more especially, they departed, and the latter sought out his lord forthwith. "I have tried this leech many times," said he, "but this day more particularly, and he rings true metal on every point. We may trust him in all things."

"Dost thou really think so, Folkham? then will he be a great acquisition; but he must be tried a little longer. Any intelligence farther?"

Folkham longed to tell him poor Marion's secret; but he would fain avoid the rage and its effects into which it would throw Heselrig, and therefore had he mentioned the fact to Galbraith, who, he hoped, would undertake the task. "Nothing worthy of mention, saving, it may be, that Red Angus and his men have pounced upon Fulke of Brito, who wons near the outlaw leaguer, and carried him off."

"So! Well, there was more lost at Allanton! But it is strange that we cannot catch that mad thief anywhere astray from his gang. I fear we shall not succeed with him till the reinforcements come into our neighbourhood."

"And he doth wax stronger every day, while Wallace, in the far forest, it is rumoured, commands an army. If our strength doth increase by this delay, certes, so doth theirs."

"Well! that is the business of Longshanks and the Governor, who have by this time, I hope, settled their revilings on the one hand, and protestations on the other."

"Galbraith doth give a good account of the lady; she doth gather strength rapidly."

"And I hope will soon be able to receive my visits. I tell thee, Folkham, though I know thou dost hardly believe me, for I have ever trusted thee, perhaps too far, with other secrets, that I am deeply enamoured of this disdainful fair one. By Heaven! there never was such a face—such a form, since Venus arose from the sea."

"Who was she, may I ask? A mermaiden?"

Galbraith hath tales singularly curious of them?" enquired Folkham, respectfully, but unable to resist the impression of something out of the common line in his master's exclamation—"Mermaiden! Pshaw! I forget thou art untaught. This talking with the Leech hath brought back my monkish lore, as thou seest, Folkham; but, Venus! surely thou must have heard of her, although thou canst neither read nor write?"

"No, by my word, never!" said Folkham, with a grave shake of his head, and an enquiring look. "Nay, I have no strange tale for thee. Galbraith will tell thee who the lady was."

"Strange," continued Heselrig, as if speaking to himself, "the distinctions which men establish among themselves. Thou art noble, and dost look down on the lowly born as the veriest clod of the valley, although their enlightened souls be to thine as the sun to a rushlight, and thou art in fact in comparison with them as a clod is to animated nature; yet thou wouldst spurn such a one as men call this serf of Riccarton now!"

"Surely, I would spurn such an upstart, and

the rather that he excels in the priestly craft of reading and making words!" replied Folkham, with a toss of his head.

"His name rose to my remembrance, now, because of his rapid attainment, all say, of knowledge; but it is well it is so, as I wish to enquire about him. Hast thou any more intelligence?"

"None, my Lord, beyond what I already gave you; he was seen two days agone in Lanark, doubtless at his old trade of espial, in which he is so excellent."

"And he shall reap his reward in a short shrift and the highest bough of our gallows-tree; look to it—bring him not to me when he is caught, but give him due elevation at once."

"Certes, I have pleasure in the duty; to think of his silly looks at Ayr, and his foolish questions, and he, all the time, picking up every word that dropped, and then to turn out, after Wallace himself, the fellest and bloodiest of our outlaw foes! Would he were caught!"

"Offer twenty pounds of the beggarly money of

this country for the knave's apprehension. It is a disgrace to us all that the fellow, who was almost savage the other day, should circumvent us !"

" It shall be done, and I doubt not with effect, though the villein burghers be but too ready to wink at the presence of such intruder. He must be, like other foul birds of the same nest, peering about for intelligence regarding this lady."

" And wherefore of the lady ?"

" Nay, my Lord, what know I ? save that the bruit runs of such a one being here, and of her peerless beauty," said Folkham, rather startled by the question.

" There is more in it. Can this greenwood hero have cast the eyes of affection on her ? That were a presumption which she could soon repress, I opine."

" Surely, no one is better able," replied Folkham.

" It is not unlikely," said Heselrig, musing, " but very improbable, that she can know of it ; or, if she did, hold intercourse with a proscribed felon. But how got the news abroad of the Lady Marion being here ?"

"That is impossible to tell. Yet it would be difficult to conceal such a fact, when so many were witnesses of it, and especially strangers like the Glasgow leech."

"What hath Angus done with that foolish De Brito?" asked Heselrig abruptly, changing the subject.

"His steward, who saw the capture, and was nearly beaten to death by the rogues, avers that Angus said he would keep him as hostage for one unjustly kept in captivity by the Piercy's friends. And this after De Brito had menaced him with the vengeance of his kinsman the Governor."

"That shall avail him but little. The Lord Piercy dare not, for the golden circle above his cap, recognise such remote consanguinity, if there be any at all, in affairs that belong to the Crown. And the serfs, what hath he done with them?"

"He is feeding the wretched starvelings, doubtless, up to fighting mark, and then he will clap spears into their hands, and hides on their backs.

Marry, it is his mode of recruiting. Already hath he gained many in the same fashion."

"By St George! this caution in the movements of our men in power, will lose us all the people of the west. The Campbell is stirring in Argyle; Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham are ready for revolt; and this shire openly bristling with spears to aid the outlaw—yet they move at a snail's pace!"

"Doubtless our liege hath good reason. No prince of the day is more wise or far-seeing. It may be that he doth desire to bring down a force, at once sufficient, not only to disperse the outlaw bands, but to inflict due punishment on those daring barons who have either avowedly or secretly supported them."

"Then, the wretched country is already eaten up by the men who are here now; and where to get provisions, when our present supply fails, passeth my understanding."

"I think we may trust the provident care of the King for supplies, though he did fail grievously in former times when the natives died like sheep under a plague."

"Yes," replied Heselrig with a smile, "but these *were* natives! thou mayest remember our men—at least so I have heard said—never lacked the necessary food."

"Truly no, for it was on failure of their own that they took from the miserable people their scanty pittance and thus destroyed them. Much hath a king to answer for, I fear me!"

"Well, let him answer it. Thou needst not whine about it, for I am sure thou likest a Scot as thou dost a wild cat, and for the same reason, that thou mayest hunt him down."

"Truly, my Lord, I bear them no liking; but still, when such deeds are done, one must dread the vengeance of another power than man."

"Thou art in thy sentimental mood, to-day, my 'Squire, but it will go off soon, and thou will be able to see that we are but instruments—the swords only of our great King; and we can be no more blamed for our actions than the blades we wear, when we sheath them in the bowels of the Scots."

CHAPTER III.

> See thou dost thine errand deftly.—
> This thief is wily; and in his strength
> Right masterful. 'Tis craft must win him.
> *Old Play.*

THE Lord Piercy, between the unmeasured censure of his Sovereign for a mishap which was little anticipated, and his apprehension of farther disaster, was in a position most painful to one of his lofty spirit. The leading men of the inhabitants under his rule had manifested less alacrity than usual in answering his summons for aid against the outlaw. It was evident they attached great importance to Wallace's success at Allanton, otherwise, they would have replied, by immediate attendance, personally, to give counsel and assistance, in place of sending assurances of support. Among them all, none excited his suspicions more than Sir Ranald

Crawford, cautious and politic as the old chief was. Piercy's system of espionage was so well organized, that he easily ascertained that some principal men of his clan fought on the side of Wallace on that day, and the near affinity between them naturally led to the belief that he would incline to the cause of his nephew, seeing it was also the cause of his country. After that battle, the Baron of Loudon had been stripped of his almost nominal office of Sheriff. This he cared little for, as he had been gradually deprived of the power which in former times belonged to it.

King Edward desirous of striking a blow that would not only lay the Scots at his mercy immediately but inspire them with such lasting terror as would effectually prevent future resistance to his power, had strictly ordered Cressingham, Piercy, and the other chief rulers in Scotland, to refrain from any attack on the various bands of outlaws, scattered over the country, until an overwhelming force could be brought simultaneously against them. But Piercy, aware of the increasing strength of Wallace, was not without fears of

an attack on Lanark Castle, and some other strongholds. He took care therefore to fill it with men, while, in order to gain time, he thought of sending some influential person to Wallace, to treat of accommodation, and he selected Sir Ranald for that purpose, much to the surprise and no little displeasure of the old Baron.

The Lord Governor was seated in an apartment of Ayr Castle, with several of his principal officers around him, to whom he was continually putting questions. "Hath old Loudon been duly summoned for to-day?"

"He hath, my Lord," replied his seneschal.

"Where is the man from the outlaw leaguer? Hold! let him stay—I think thou canst remember all he said; that Wallace hath his camp in the wood to the north of Lanark, an outpost being so near as Cartland Crags, less than a quarter league of the Castle; that the rebel hath caught and hung, on the skirts of the forest, two of our best espials, as a lesson to others, so that no man dare venture beyond the verge of the wood."

"One man only, under submission, my Lord, whose

name was Baldock, and the outlaw said he was a base traitor as well as spy."

"Well! but another is missing, and supposed to have been slain in like manner?"

"Such is the information."

"That he is daily waxing stronger, and openly in communication with the barons of the shire; and Angus MacRie is seizing, making captive, and spoiling those near his lair, who are true subjects of King Edward, while the Governor of Lanark is too feeble to move an arm against the outlaws; and the tidings are confirmed by the written cartels of our faithful Arthur of Heselrig. No account yet of the force from Lothian?"

"They are mustering and holding their weapon-shawings, but they will not move, I believe, till the bands from the south make their appearance on this side the Tweed."

"So, the sum of our scouts' intelligence amounts to this, that the force of rebels doth increase, so as to enable them to slay our best men of enterprise, keep our castellans and lieutenants at bay, and spoil and harry our faithful subjects at pleasure. This poor

gentleman whom Angus hath taken, though feeble in intellect, is yet of good blood, and must not be allowed to perish in the hands of those wild Scots."

"So please my Lord, he is kept as hostage, so Angus doth give out, for the Lady Marion of Lammington detained at Lanark."

"True! But the lady, being a ward of the Crown, doth not need his protection."

Here an attendant announced the arrival of Sir Ranald Crawford, who was straightway ushered into the presence of the Lord Governor. "Welcome! Sir Ranald Crawford."

"I bid you good morrow heartily, my Lord," said the old man, bowing, then standing erect and stately before the delegate of the usurper, who deigned not to rise from his chair.

"We sent for you, Lord of Loudon, on some matters of weight and import arising out of these troublous times. Doubtless you are aware of the disaffection which hath arisen and spread through this district, to a great extent through the malversation of the traitor and rebel, William Wallace, who is of near kindred to you?"

"It is well known to the Lord Governor that he is my nephew; the fact hath been neither hidden nor denied."

"So! moreover, certain of thy kinsmen were seen in the fight at Allanton, deeply engaged in the cause of this rebellious and mischievous man. Ha! what canst thou answer to that accusation?" continued Piercy, frowning on Sir Ranald, who answered with a proud, yet composed look.

"My Lord," said he, "I will not say that the country is not disturbed, and that William Wallace hath not had much to do in exciting the people to rise against your authority, but that I ever either aided or abetted him in it, I clearly and positively deny. It is known also to your Lordship, that when young men of spirit behold their friends called to action, while they are left, as it were, to rust in repose, they will shew discontent, and it may be, break forth from the restraint imposed on them by those who are their heads and rulers. That this may have been the case with some Crawfords, I cannot take on me to deny, seeing that many of them live at a distance from their Chief, and their deeds can

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scarcely be controlled by him ; but I do aver, that none were there with my license and consent."

" It hath ever been the custom in Scotland," said Piercy, looking more and more stern, " to make the head of a tribe responsible for the inferior people."

" Scarcely," replied Sir Ranald, heedless of the Governor's angry eye, " since the days of the sainted David, when southern men, and southern customs, began to pour in on the land ; the Celtic fashions are now confined to remote districts."

" I called thee not," replied Piercy, " to argue questions of polity, but for a far different purpose. This nephew of thine hath incurred the wrath and high displeasure of his Sovereign. Mercy cannot reach him, unless from contrition. Thou canst say nothing in extenuation of his crime ?"

" Certes, it is not my intention to justify him ; yet the poor lad, in some sort, hath been but hardly entreated. His father was killed in a manner which your Lordship could not approve, and his elder brother also fell in these unhappy quarrels ; in all that time William was blamed for nothing. In

fact, he was too young to give offence to any one in power; but his paternal estate hath been withheld from him."

"Because of his rebellious race, it was held in ward, to see whether this springald would shew a better spirit than the rest," broke in Piercy fiercely; "and now, since he hath shewn his real nature, doubt not it will be granted to some true subject."

"The King's pleasure must be done," said Sir Ranald; "but were I to counsel his Grace, I would say, that lenity in regard to men of influence would do more to establish his authority than severity."

"He hath no opportunity of shewing clemency without endangering his authority; clemency to Wallace would be death to the latter."

"It had been better, in that case, to shew mildness and forgiveness, before a man is driven to such extremity."

"How! Dare you to accuse the King of severity?"

"I accuse the King of nothing," replied Loudon with great composure, while Piercy's features shewed a high degree of anger.

"It is only me thou dost raise thy voice against; but I am too high also for such as thou! Remember, old man, thou art in the presence of the Lord Piercy of Northumberland."

"I do remember it," said Sir Ranald, a slight flush appearing on his cheek; "and I cannot altogether forget that I am the head of a race, whose blood is as pure and as ancient as thine, thou proud Lord of Northumberland." Pausing a moment, he went on—(Piercy had risen from his chair, ashamed of the heat he betrayed, and was rapidly pacing the floor)—"If I have been driven to talk in a fashion which doth savour little of respect, I pray you, Lord Governor, to bear in mind it was not I who began to speak in that manner first."

Piercy felt irritated again by the style of conversation kept up by Loudon, which indicated no intention of giving in to his arrogant pretensions. He felt that Sir Ranald, whose "blood was now up," was determined, his office set apart, to be on a footing of equality with him. He had great command over his temper, however; and finding that high words and angry looks had no effect on the

stately old Chief, he soon assumed a different aspect, and another style of speech.

"Thou art warm, Sir Ranald Crawford; rather too hot, for a man of thine age methinks; but let that pass. Wouldst thou desire to see thy nephew redeemed from the error of his ways, and again established in my opinion, and possibly in that of King Edward?"

"I would, doubtless, desire to see my poor nephew happy, and this poor land pacificated and happy also," replied Sir Ranald, who felt the question to be a trying one.

"Then thou wilt lend thy utmost endeavours to bring him back to his allegiance, in the journey which I am about to assign thee, which is to visit Wallace, and hold parley with him, having a view to an arrangement and a pardon."

"Give place!" continued he to his attendants, who instantly left the apartment, leaving the two together.

Sir Ranald was astonished by this announcement of a task which was totally unlooked for, and he would fain have withdrawn from it; but the

Governor hinted, pretty broadly, that his lands would be endangered by the construction which might be put upon his refusal.

"Now that we are alone, my good old friend, let me say, that the uncourtly words uttered by me, were not from the heart, but the emanation of a spirit, chafed beyond measure by these calamitous times," said Piercy, resuming the bland and high-toned courtesy of his usual manner to people of consideration.

"Heed them not! In troth, I myself, as your Lordship did well remark, am a hot old carle," replied Loudon; but inwardly he thought to himself, "now hath he some great thing to ask of me," and he was not long in ascertaining the fact.

"It would be vain to deny Sir Ranald, that your nephew is a youth of great courage and uncommon parts; it is a pity, therefore, to see him, as it were, casting to the winds the gifts with which he is endowed, and which, in the service of a warlike Sovereign, could not fail to exalt him high among the nobles of the land. Now, I pray you, mark what must be his hap; it can be nothing

but a miserable end, for the power of England is as ten to one against this poor little land, and our King is resolved on maintaining his right; a short triumph and subsequent ruin are all that Wallace can look for on one side, and on the other, lasting fame, enduring honours, are within his reach. Tell him then to abandon his present course, prevail on his allies and followers to return to their peaceful homes and occupations, and he shall soon be high in place and power, with good baronies in addition to his father's one of Elderslie; all these I am authorized to offer."

"Since I must go, I shall deliver your Lordship's message," said Sir Ranald with a sigh; "but I know well, if you could pledge yourself to an amelioration in the condition of our unhappy people, it would make more with William, than the promise of an earldom, with all its wealth." And as he spoke he looked full at Piercy, who replied evasively that the policy of England, with regard to Scotland, was fixed by the King and his Parliament, and the established system must be there

changed, ere the local rulers could make any alteration. "But surely," continued he, "this young man cannot be so visionary as to prefer his country's interest to his own?"

"I can well believe," replied Loudon gravely, "that one who hath been trained in all the wiles and subtleties of a statesman, may have difficulty in believing how a youth, full of fire and desire of distinction, should in all things consider his country's wellbeing before his own; yet such is the case with my nephew."

Piercy actually stared with astonishment. "Did you not look so grave, Sir Ranald, I should certainly think you were jesting with me; but I must say plainly, that in my poor judgment, such a person as a pure patriot, if such there be, which I still doubt, excepting in the romaunts of minstrels, must be fit only to herd with moonstruck poets and dreaming saints. It is impossible that a man of action can be stirred by any motive save his own advancement."

"Such, doubtless, is the opinion of those who

have mixed most with the world, and learned the ways of men; and, more especially, the gay and gallant of the Court, who sun themselves in the favour of their Prince; but William Wallace hath been bred and taught afar from such men and such scenes, and his studies have been of the great men of other days, until he hath formed to himself from them a model which is ever present to his mind; and to act up to it is the summit of his ambition."

The Lord Piercy paused a moment to muse over these observations of Sir Ranald, being in fact surprised and puzzled by the serious and truthful air with which they were made.

He could not comprehend the character of Wallace, as it was represented to him now; for he had never doubted that the sole object of the young man, in making such singular exertions, was to earn a reputation which would recommend him to some powerful lord or prince, who would take him under his protection, and make his fortune. In truth, it it was the practice; and every worldly man, like the Lord Governor, would have come to the same conclusion. He could not comprehend how such

a person should be on the face of the earth, so he shook his head, as he replied—"My good friend, this nephew of thine is as subtle as he is bold, and he hath found means to create a belief in you, that he is a character which hath no counterpart in creation; that is, a man who hath no thought of self."

"I said not so either; under favour, he is full of ambition, but it is of a different sort from that which your Lordship doth understand. He is desirous of having his name told in every Christian land as the Liberator of his country; and he would rather earn that appellation than be created a belted earl, with a county for appanage. Such is the man. If King Edward or his deputy will offer terms which embrace such measures of relief as he may think sufficient, I doubt not he will listen to them, for he loveth not war for its own sake; but think not to tempt him with promises that relate only to himself."

Piercy by this time had made up his mind that the old man was the dupe of his nephew, and that it was in vain to argue with him. "Well," said

he, "I have already explained that it rests not with me to legislate for Scotland; but do thou now, my good Loudon, deal fairly with me, and tell thy nephew all I have said—all I have offered; and you may add, that if he listen not to reason, and trust to the clemency of the King for redress of what he calleth grievances, I cannot answer for the safety. and especially the lands, of his own friends—even thine, my venerable friend, and those of thy kindred—which are already under the suspicious eye of Edward. What more can I say? I have been frank and open with thee, as it is possible for ancient comrade in arms to be."

"I thank you, my Lord, for your courtesy, and I shall do your Lordship's message fairly, but I cannot engage for success."

"Thou wert ever wise and wary, and art known to have more weight with Wallace than any other man. If thou dost urge thy reasons strongly as thou canst, doubt not he will yield; but whatever be the event, let this be remembered, Sir Ranald Crawford, that not one word of this, our private discourse, must be whispered into any ear but his!"

Piercy pronounced the last words with an air that was almost threatening, and London took his leave, inwardly thinking that he had escaped the presence of a foe, who in his blandest and softest mood is most likely to turn and rend his prey. He knew that the Lord Governor shewed his real feeling towards him in the first part of the interview, and in presence of his followers, and that the same spirit was merely smoothed over for the nonce, in order to gain him to his purpose. Had Sir Ranald been as deep as a politician, he would have framed any excuse for declining the dangerous sort of diplomacy in which he was now to be engaged; but he thought only, at the moment, of the risk he would incur by refusing, which was certainly considerable, but infinitely less than that in which he involved himself by adopting the opposite course; for, if he failed, and he knew it must be so, he could not possibly escape the deadly suspicion of both King and Governor, which was already excited towards him, and would be turned into conviction by the result of his expedition. Edward would, more readily than even Piercy,

laugh with scorn at the idea of an obscure man, sprung from the inferior class of nobles, despising wealth and rank, and in all likelihood be ready to believe that the uncle had failed to propose the terms offered to the nephew, and had tacitly, if not actively encouraged him to proceed in his rebellious course. It could not be denied that the mortification to his pride, which Piercy had experienced lately, had increased his rancour and bitterness against the Scottish barons, and he thought no punishment would be too severe for men who had brought down the rebuke of his Sovereign on him.

But, notwithstanding this, he was deeply apprehensive of the great sway which he had ascertained Wallace to possess over the minds of his countrymen, and he felt that to detatch him from the Scottish cause, would be to gain for Edward an advantage which scarcely any victory could secure to him; so rapidly had the information acquired regarding him, confirmed by the developement of events, produced this correct impression on the mind of the sagacious politician. He had another card which he thought of playing. But, although

impressed with the belief that Sir Ranald was wrought upon by the more pregnant ingenuity of his nephew, he nevertheless believed that he might shew some pride or delicacy of feeling, and shrink from committing himself openly to a desertion of his principles, otherwise he would have included the marriage of the Lady Marion in the proffered bribe; who, being as he said, a ward of the Crown, could not take a husband without the king's consent, or the forfeiture of her possessions. But he thought it better to keep this back at present, for the reason mentioned, that it would lead immediately to the discovery of his being tampered with, on which account Wallace would be sure to decline it; and because he wished to have something in reserve for the future.

It was true she had been promised to Heselrig, but he would find means to compensate that worthy Knight for the abstraction of his richly dowered bride. Yet, it would not be altogether wise to incur the risk of disgusting even him at such a period, when good leaders and men-at-arms were so much wanted. Thus was the wily and ex-

perienced Lord Pierey forced to rack his brains in every way, and to conciliate one who but yesterday was beneath his notice. A boy in years, and the son of a paltry knight, of no more weight than one of his own household. Had it been the scion of a great family, whose blood was mingled with that of the royal line of Scotland, it had been some consolation.

CHAPTER IV.

" Fiercely cried Sir Staudenfuss,
' Thou art the devil's priest.' "
Book of Heroes.

THE rapidity with which the Lady Marion recovered from her illness (the effect of a good and youthful constitution) was surprising, in the opinion of Sir Arthur Heselrig, and still more so in that of his 'squire, who found in it fresh proofs of Galbraith's great skill and extraordinary powers. She was now arrayed, and sitting at the open casement, enjoying the fresh air, and the sight, no less refreshing, to one who has been some time confined to a bed of sickness, of the green fields and the rustling trees; while her handmaiden looked on her with beaming eyes.

" Methinks, dear Dora," said she, " the whole

face of nature looks more gay and pleasant than ever. How sweet to me that daisy spangled park! and how happy should those sheep be who range it at pleasure! and so softly on mine ear doth fall the distant roar of Cora Linn, reminding me of our own murmuring stream!" And she heaved a deep sigh.

"Doubtless, Lady, it is the fever which doth cause everything to look more sweet to thee," replied Dora.

"And the confinement too, Dora; but the Leech hath promised to get the rigour of our imprisonment abated. He is a strange man, as thou didst say; for his looks and his speech do not correspond."

"O, Lady, sometimes I shrink from him as if he were an adder, and at other times I feel as mildly towards him as if he were our best friend. I thought he looked so full of pity, as he gazed on you once or twice, that I was sure he meant to be our friend; but again, he would frown, and cause those fearful eyebrows to meet."

"He hath been a friendly physician; but for

aught else, my Dora, from one of Hesilrig's household we must not look."

"I fear it is so, indeed; for, although I sometimes converse with them freely when we meet, I have caught no word from them regarding those who are every thing to us."

"But there hath been a battle, thou dost think, and our party victorious? I am sure it must be so."

"I told my Lady what I chanced to overhear, which satisfied me that such had been the case, and that the good Chief, after fighting like ten men, was alive and well."

"Which to me is blessing incalculable," said Marion, looking up with thanksgiving, and kissing a little crucifix which hung round her neck. "That something hath happened, I know, from the increased hum and din which ascend occasionally from below, and which must come from an additional number of men in the Castle."

Here one of Heselrig's attendants came to the door of the apartment, to intimate that a monk from Lesmahagow, known to the Lady Marion, de-

sired to be admitted. "And my Lord," said he, "hath accorded this boon, seeing that the good man hath been kind to some of our yeomen."

With great presence of mind she replied, "It must be Father Robert, mine ancient Confessor! O, let me see him."

The attendant retired and soon returned, ushering in a tall man, whose form was shrouded in his gown and cowl. Instead of addressing the lady he merely raised his hands, exclaiming "Benedicite!" as he entered, and then turned round. "Give us leave, my friend, the lady would doubtless confess; it is long since she was absolved." The man bowed and withdrew. The seeming priest then carefully fastened the door and turned slowly round. Marion had gazed on him at first, until her eye kindled and her head swam. Now she, without the least hesitation, threw herself upon him, utterly unable to speak a word, yet strong enough to suppress a cry. Wallace clasped her in his arms. A startled sort of scream from Dora caused him to seize her also, and put a hand over her mouth, until her first surprise was over. For a minute per-

fect silence prevailed among the three; at length Marion raised her face bathed in tears and fixed her eyes on him, his cowl being now thrown back, gazing intently: "And thou art well," said she at length, sighing deeply, "mine own William Wallace. Our Almighty Father be praised!" Her head sank again on his breast, and Wallace pressed her to it.

"I am strong and well, mine own Marion, as thy loving heart can wish; and my trust is in God, that I shall yet release thee from the fangs of this tyrant."

"But, O my William, wherefore run this fearful risk?"

"Call up thy courage, sweet one; trust me, I fear nothing."

"Tell me, hast thou prospered?"

"I have, my Marion; we have beat them to mine own heart's content."

"Did I not know thou wouldst!" her eye flashing. "Yea, and shalt again!"

"Now thou art like Marion of Lammington! But listen, dearest, my time is short. I could gain

no intelligence of thee. Cormack, I fear me, hath miscarried. Next to thee, and equal to my nearest kinsman, stood he in my love; but what hath happed I know not. He left Simon's house some days past, and, since the day thereafter, I have had no tidings of him. I fear me, some roving party of the Southron hath seized him."

"A sad loss to thee, dear William."

"Indeed it is. Just now, I hoped for his aid in circumventing the Southrons, so as to open a communication with thee. I am forced to come in person; and for a priest, no other disguise being available, thou seest I am of the tallest.—Well," speaking more rapidly, "that smile doth become thee! Thine uncle is well, and near me. The Scottish nation is rising in arms; and I hope soon to drive the Southrons from this place, and to rescue thee; meanwhile, be of good cheer; think it no dishonour to deceive this villanous Castellan or Sheriff in any way thou canst. Trust none about him, above all this Black Leech. I like not his character; albeit, he hath ministered skilfully to thee. Thou art well, I see, in health now. Is it not so?"

"It is; thanks to that man. I am quite restored."

"Praised be Heaven for it!"

Marion asked in return a number of questions; and it was with difficulty, after a longer stay than was prudent, that he tore himself from her.

"How is it with mine uncle, thou sayest he is well?"

"He is quiet, and I think right perfectly, in his understanding, save when he is agitated by thoughts of thee; and he doth keep them down by diligent attention to the means of rescuing thee. He hath a gallant band of mountain men, and he is training them carefully. All I fear is, that he may rashly dare some enterprise which will expose him to our enemy; but I have set the most careful and trusty of my own friends around him—and now, dearest, I fear me, the time is expired which a priest should spend in the confessional with two penitents; cheer thee, and trust me all shall yet be well; and thou, good and faithful maiden, believe that I shall ever remember thy kindness to thy lady." So saying, he hastily pressed the hand

of Dora, warmly embraced his betrothed, and flung out of the room, without pausing a moment for reply.

Marion leaned on her attendant, as if exhausted by the exciting scene; and the latter gently withdrew her into the sleeping room, which opened into the apartment where they were, and prevailed on her to repose a short while on the bed.

"Thou art not strong enough yet, Lady, for such trials; but blessed be God for it, thou wilt rise better and stronger from what thou hast seen and heard!"

Wallace pursued his way hastily along the gallery, down the stairs, and through the courts, without meeting with any obstruction, although every man he met turned and stared at a priest of such unusual size, and he distinctly heard one exclaim, "By my halidome! that man hath mistaken his business; what hath he to do with mass and breviary? A six-ell lance would suit him better, I wis."

Near the gate, as he passed slowly along, casting wary glances from beneath his cowl, he en-

countered Galbraith, who eyed him most attentively, and turned to look after him. Wallace also, just as he came close to the warders there, hastily looked round, to get another sight of a man whom he much suspected; and at that instant a sudden gust of wind blew the cowl aside. Probably he was less attentive just then to it, and his features were distinctly revealed. Adjusting it instantly, he passed out, and walked swiftly in the direction of the river, whose banks were thickly covered with trees that extended along its course even to the great forest; for he saw a startled expression in the face of one sentinel whom he passed. The nearest point of this wood was half a mile from the Castle, and towards it he bent his steps, as the nearest covert, in the event of his being pursued; for the town he did not consider a safe place.

It is necessary to revert here to his entrance into the Castle, which took place at the time Heselrig was sitting in the hall, receiving the burghers and others on business; and he, in order to relieve the tediousness of his occupation, had directed Galbraith to sit beside him on a stool,

that they might converse at intervals—an amusement which had lately become frequent with him. While he was thus occupied, the desire of a priest to visit the Lady Marion was whispered to him.

"A priest!" exclaimed he in wrath. "What doth the meddling fellow want?"

"So please my Lord, to confess the lady!"

"Ah!" said Galbraith, "that must be the man she hath spoken to me of; some old acquaintance, I believe. Better let him go; it will aid in her convalescence. On such young minds the priest doth make deep impression."

"Dost thou think so, Galbraith? If I thought he had no other intention—"

"I am sure he hath not. What, Sir Arthur! we surely can't be afraid of a wretched shaveling!" said Galbraith, with a scornful look.

"Afraid! No, no; but somewhat suspicious we may be. Well; take him up to the lady's apartments."

He was soon so deeply engaged in conversation, that both the priest and the business of the day were forgotten, until Galbraith withdrew to see

one of the garrison who required him, just at the time Wallace was also taking his departure. One of the sentinels, on seeing the face of the latter, started as if surprised, and the other immediately said that he had certainly seen that priest somewhere else, but he could not remember where.

"I am so surprised," said the other, "that methinks I am in a dream;—it cannot be—the thing is impossible!"

"What dost thou mean?" enquired the other.

"Canst thou not call to mind the face that, without a visor, glared so fearfully on us at Allanton? By the holy rood! the man that face belonged to was more awful on that day than all the Scottish host! But surely he would not venture—I must have mistaken—it cannot be he!"

"By Heaven! it is the very man! now I recollect him. Raise the alarum! Warn the captain of the guard!"

Galbraith, who had listened to this conversation, eagerly hastened to the hall, and, with a face of anxiety, mentioned the suspicions of the sentinels.

"Mount! mount! and chase!" cried Heselrig, starting up and rushing to the door.

The confusion was extreme. A number of men-at-arms were instantly mounted on the horses which were always kept ready saddled; archers and spearmen rushed out also, while all the rest who were not ordered on the service, or otherwise employed, ran to the battlements to behold the chase. Folkham commanded the pursuing party, and Heselrig was among the first on the ramparts. Wallace, whose senses were acute and alive to every variation of sound, instantly perceived a change from the previous stillness which reigned, to a sort of confused hum, and, suspecting the cause, quickened his pace. He was now within little more than a couple of hundred paces of the wood, so well had he used his time, when (as he turned round frequently) he observed the horsemen issue furiously from the Castle gate. He was then among a quantity of brushwood and low trees, which afforded him no screen from observation, for he was distinctly perceived by Heselrig and the rest; but after a few seconds, he disappeared, and Heselrig's impatience became great. "Where hath the knave gone?—dost see him any one?

Hell and the devil! he will escape them yet! But no; there he is again! I see him distinctly behind that scrubby tree." All eyes were turned on the figure, clearly perceptible where he pointed it out. "Surely the fellow is a fool to imagine he is hidden there! See! they near him—they surround the patch of coppice! I hear their shouts even here," cried Heselrig, he himself shouting exultingly, joined by all on the walls.

Folkham and his party were as sure of their game as if he was in their clutches, and after the force had been disposed so as cut off every chance of escape, the leader went into the coppice where the figure of Wallace was seen, as if crouching behind a low bushy birch, which screened him effectually on one side, but left the others exposed.

"Come forth, thou rebel! Render thyself to the king's authority! Stand up, and answer to true men, thou false thief!" Surprised by the silence of the party, and his motionless attitude, Folkham then went forward, and, with the butt of his lance, poked the seeming Wallace, when, to his astonishment and mortification, the apparently well-filled

gown yielded to the pressure of his weapon, and fell to the ground empty. "What the foul fiend have we here? Surely this villain deals with Satan himself! But he cannot be far off. Search every bush in the coppice! bestir, bestir!" With fierce and disappointed looks, the men-at-arms obeyed, and they were soon joined by the footmen of the party, so that in brief space the patch was thoroughly searched, and nothing got by it.

Heselrig at first could not comprehend why they did not bring their captive immediately, but his rage and disappointment were excessive when he observed that the search was renewed.

"He must be in the wood," exclaimed Galbraith. "I saw something like a man creeping on the ground near it." Just then Folkham was advancing on it. About a bowshot from its verge was a woodman's cottage.

"Search—search every tree and bush!" cried Folkham. "Here, Foster, take ten with you, and push on before that hut; and thou, Sakeld, take other ten, and keep near the river edge; moving, both of you, rather swiftly, so that you may over-

take him if he be on before." The most intense anxiety prevailed in the band. The prize was immense, and the reward would be in proportion. Folkham rode on to the cottage, leaving his men to continue, as they went along, the most minute investigation into every spot. He expected to gain some information from the inmates; but when he approached, he found the door closed. Riding round, he came to an aperture—a hole—in the rude tree-built hovel, that served for a window; and, peeping in, he perceived the woodman, with his wife and an old stranger, so deeply engaged in conversation, that they evidently knew not of what was passing around them.

The stranger seemed to be a minstrel, for he held a harp in his hand, and his fingers played with the strings as he conversed with the rest. A most venerable appearance had this old man;—he was clothed in a long loose gown of sad-coloured cloth, fastened by a plain girdle round his waist. His beard and hair were as white as the snow of Tinto: he seemed even too old for his art. Folkham sat on his saddle, unobserved, while he listened to their

conversation. They were talking of minstrelsy, and of a lay which had just been sung. "Nay," said the wife, "I say not so, father Halbert, it was no word of mine; but our Castle minstrel, Walter de Mont is his name, doth dislike such ballad gear, for he is all for virelays, and lays with strange names from France."

"A Norman belike," replied the Minstrel; "it is just that he should like best his own country minstrelsy, as I do mine."

"It is so, good father," said the woodman, as I ever tell my dame; but, soothly, we have all heard De Mont's lays so often, that we e'en know them as well as he. It is novelty that pleaseth, and therefore thou art so welcome, for it is many years now since thou wert in these parts."

"Thou art in the right; I am old now, my friend, and my limbs move not as of yore; even my minstrel voice doth fail me."

"Thou shalt not say so, Halbert; I never heard thee in better tune than to-night," replied the wife; "and if the menzie at the Castle knew thou wert here, I doubt not our Sheriff himself would send thee a courteous bidding to it."

" Nay, good dame, I have neither time nor strength for such an undertaking; it would be the end of me, I think," said the Minstrel, in a feeble tone.

" Nay, if thou must be at Symington by to-morrow noon, truly thou canst not harp and carp to the garrison; thou art not strong enough to play and sing all night," said the dame, " for thou art e'en sore forfoughten already."

" Not so much as thou dost imagine, my good hostess," replied the stranger, rousing himself, as if mortified by her commiseration; " give me a cup of liquor, and thou shalt hear a strain of the sort thou dost best love."

" Marry, and shall," said she, " most cheerfully;" smiling as she administered a draught to him.

" Thou art all for ballad minstrelsy," replied the stranger; " and here is one, a lay of Palestine and its adventurous Knights;" and so saying, he began to sing the following:—

1.

" What news? what news? thou Pilgrim grey,
What news from Palestine?

Or dost thou come, good Father say,
From blest Loretto's shrine?"

2.

"Thou noble Dame! full many a mile
I've trod my weary way
From Holy Land, and Cyprian Isle,
Where good King Richard lay."

3.

"O heardst thou aught of a Scottish Knight,
Sir Hugh the Boyd by name?"
"The heathen spear hath quell'd his might;
He sleeps on the bed of fame."

4.

"Why shrink you, noble Dame, from me,
And wax so pale and cold?
O why have I told this tale to thee?—
Thou'st known the Baron bold."

5.

But down to earth that lady sank,
And deathlier grew and wan;
Seem'd as the news her life-blood drank,
Distraught was the stranger man.

6.

He's doff'd the garb that his form conceal'd,
Till the warrior stood confest,
And the baldrick broad his rank reveal'd,
With knighthood's star on his breast.

7.

" Look up! look up! my ladye love;
Behold, thy Knight is here!
Disguised he hath come, thy faith to prove,
Unscathed by Paynim spear."

8.

" What voice! what voice! my lord! my life!
'Tis thine sounds in mine ear!
Blest be this day, the Pilgrim's coif
Is changed to my warrior's gear!"

When he had finished, the old man threw himself back as if exhausted, and indeed his voice, as he proceeded with the ballad, had several times betrayed considerable weakness. So the good dame was justified in handing to him another drop of her cordial, and she did it this time, without hinting at his exhaustion, just as a matter of course.

" In good sooth," said she, " such strains may be but rough and irregular, Minstrel; but they smack of the old times, and that is enough for me."

Here the voice of Folkham broke in on them for the first time. " Ho! woodman! What! art thou asleep? that thou canst not hear all the turmoil around thee?"

The man looked up and saw more than one head

clustering round the little window, for several others of the men-at-arms had by this time followed their leader's example, and paused at the sound of minstrelsy, they being already tired of the pursuit, which they began to think hopeless.

"What!" continued Folkham, "couldst not hear the din?"

"Truly," replied the woodman, "we heard some noise, but I have long given up following the chase, and so—"

"Chase!" cried Folkham. "Ay, indeed! a man chase! a rebel hunt, my masters, even a hunt of Wallace!"

The woodman started up, and the wife crossed herself, exclaiming, "Jesu Maria! What! so near us!"

"So near," said Folkham, with a sour smile, "that I must even search thy house, my good woman;" and he ordered some to dismount and search every corner of the small building. This was soon done, but without discovering any trace of the fugitive. Meanwhile Folkham entered into conversation with the old Minstrel.

"Whence art thou, old friend?" enquired he.

"From far off, gentle sir, and a true baron's household."

"A good friend and true is thy lord, is he? We have here, in the Lord of Lanark castle, a lover of the harp, and a bountiful benefactor. Wilt thou wend with me for the night? I promise thee a warm welcome."

"I give you thanks for the courteous offer, but I am ordered to return by dawn to-morrow; and, in good truth, I am unfit for a night's revelry."

Here one of his band whispered to Folkham, "Ask no questions. Bring him along. The like hath been even here, and nothing said about it. What! as well a minstrel captive as a lady!"

"Hush! thou knowest nothing. Were the quarter less unruly, and no one but our knight in the case, it were easily managed; but the Governor is so pestilently particular! It may not be; I dare not."

Another chimed in, "'Tis but a Scot! What! are we to treat them as if they were Englishmen?" But Folkham would not be persuaded.

"Look upon him," replied he, surveying the Min-

strel with a wistful look, which plainly shewed that nothing but fear of the consequences prevented him from using a sort of persuasion then much in vogue.

"Pooh! he is too old for his trade. See! he doth lack breath already."

"'Mass, thou sayest true! Look an he be not panting like a run hare."

"Pshaw! think no more of him, rather contrive some excuse for not catching this fiend of an outlaw. On my word, he is the devil!" said Folkham, earnestly.

"There be some who go near to believe as much," whispered one with a knowing look. "Well! return we, and leave to our comrades the fruitless search."

The two other parties had taken the ground in advance, and were already far out of sight. Scarcely a man of the garrison was free from superstitious feeling in regard to Wallace's escape; and when all hope was abandoned of recovering him, it broke out in sundry marvellous tales, which had foundation only in the imagination of the narrators. One warder remarked that he had

seen a flash of flame, followed by a dark column of smoke, tinged with fire, which vanished into air, just where the Black Physician saw him creeping on the ground. Another heard a strange unearthly yell at the same moment, " Just," said he, " like a fiend laughing in derision ;" by which he meant to imply that Wallace laughed at his enemies, as he escaped them by turning himself into smoke.

Heselrig, though disconcerted at first, and grievously disappointed, had heard so many similar tales of Wallace, that he knew neither he nor his men would be censured for his singular disappearance. " Had it not been for thy intercession," said he to Galbraith, " this bold knave had never got in. Nay, speak not! I know full well thou didst only think of benefiting thy patient; and thou madest ample amends, by being first to bring the alarm to me. Indeed, thou hast shewn so much zeal and alacrity in our cause to-day, that I think we may relax our rules in regard to thee. This will please thee, I know, good Galbraith."

" Certainly," replied the Leech, " since it doth shew that I am known to be an enemy to Wallace."

An ominous frown darkened still more his visage as he spoke. "Hast thou seen him before?"

"Yea; in the west he hath been for some time a marked man."

"And that varlet whom he raised to be our bitter foe—that villanous serf—hast seen him too?"

"Truly, I have; for they were frequently together;

"Then, if thou dost light on him thy fortune is made. He hath put such affront on the garrison of Ayr, by making simpletons of them when they thought they were playing with an idiot, and among the rest, the sage and wary Governor, that high preferment must be the lot of him who doth bring him to punishment."

"A poor serf!" muttered the physician, scornfully.

"Yes, a serf! but second only to his master in fiendish cunning and devilish courage. Hark ye, Leech! there is more in the pate of that lowly man, for I have heard much of him, than is to be found in the congregated heads of a hundred men-at-arms, whom I could point out to thee, though

their blood be drawn from the pure yet somewhat plenteous fountain of nobility."

"That doth not speak for them," replied Galbraith, with a grin of peculiar meaning; "but what hath Wallace wanted here?"

Heselrig started—"That is true! the stirring scene hath driven it from my remembrance. I doubt me, friend, there is something between him and this damsel. Certain hints dropped by Folkham, brought to mind some passages which prepared me for a discovery like this."

He spoke calmly, but a stern expression had stolen over his features.

"I shall soon ascertain how matters stand; and, however it be, true or false, I shall honourably offer her my hand. If it be refused, I know the reason; and if she will not yield to gentle wooing, why she is the ward of my patron as representing his Sovereign."

"And doubtless his authority will compel her to reason."

"Nay, my friend, I would not choose to apply to him thus. We shall try first some of those

precious herbs which incline the passions according to the will of the wise physician who prescribes them; and if better may not be, either the Governor or something else must be tried."

Here the expression of Heselrig's countenance was dark and mysterious, and a lurid light seemed to flash from his eye; while that of the Leech gleamed like the orbs of a tiger at first scent of his prey.

On this occasion, the love of adventure and total heedlessness of danger peculiar to him, together with his anxiety about Marion, led Wallace into a situation of extreme peril, from which his escape might well appear miraculous to the ruder portion of his enemies, although it was the result only of fortunate circumstances. The woodman was well known to him; and when Wallace contrived, by crawling and crouching, to reach the hut, and make his position known, his transmogrification was the work of an instant. The woodman, in his youth, had been given to masks and mummeries, such as were in fashion among his class at the time, and the part of an old harper

had been generally assigned to him. Thus, when Wallace hastily intimated that he was pursued by the garrison, the ready-witted wife, in a few minutes, had him arrayed in the long white locks, which fell down on his shoulders, and the beard of most venerable colour also and length, and the gown, which effectually hid the size and strength of his limbs. She also threw a cloak over his shoulders, and contrived, with the help of a little flour, to cast a whitish hue over his face, disguising him so completely, that no suspicion crossed the minds of Folkham and his party. About midnight the woodman guided him through the most intricate parts of the forest, until he was fairly on the way to his own camp, and then took leave of him.

" I shall not be long in seeing you again," said the generous fellow; " for, if this be known, the highest branch of the gallows-tree will be too low for me."

" Right valiant wert thou ever, my friend," replied Wallace, grasping his hand, " and it doth grieve me much, that my unlucky fate hath drawn thee into this jeopardy."

"Say nought about it," answered the Woodman. "Where is the Scotsman who would not risk his life for the champion of his country? But, in good sooth, I thought of seeing the leaguer before, and my wife did not object, for we are rather too near the Southrons to be well entreated by them."

"And thy wife, my brave friend?"

"Care not for her! She hath friends in other parts, where she can abide in safety; but speed thee on thy way, my noble Chief, and God be with thee! We must not dally longer." Wallace wrung his hand, and they parted.

CHAPTER V.

Thou dost solicit here a lady,
That disdains thee and the devil alike.
Cymbeline.

THE next day Heselrig resolved to follow up the hints he had thrown out in former interviews, by an open declaration of his feelings towards Marion. He felt at the time as much hatred to Wallace, to say the least of it, as love for her, and if he could triumph over him, by getting possession of the lady and her estate, he would esteem it one of the brightest incidents in his life; but he had sad misgivings, and his mind was tortured by jealousy of a man whom, above all others, he detested; a feeling sufficient to unhinge a mind, which was never controlled or regulated, and to engender dark thoughts in one who never allowed justice or honour to interfere with the gratification

of his passions, of whatever nature they might be. He had command over himself at times, however, when it was necesary to his purpose, and this was one of them. Sending Galbraith first to see that she was strong enough for the reception of such a guest, he took some pains to adorn his person, and smooth down his ruffled feelings and perturbed mind, and succeeded so well, that he entered her apartment with soft smiles and gentle greetings.

"It hath much rejoiced me, sweet lady, to learn that this cruel fever had ceased to invade a form so comely. She doth look as lovely and nearly as blooming as ever, Galbraith; for this I hold me ever thy debtor."

"I thank thee, Sir Arthur Heselrig, for thy good wishes, which indeed sound rather strangely to me, since thou hast been the cause of this fever too truly called cruel."

"Nay, fairest, continue not to visit on my head the sins of others; thou knowest I was blameless; suffer me rather to ask if there is aught wherein I may minister to thy pleasure. There is nothing which poor Arthur Heselrig would not do to win

one smile from that heavenly face." Marion's countenance assumed an expression of scorn, which, however, vanished like a shadow immediately. "If there is any thing, condescend to name it."

"Yes, there is one thing, Sir Knight, and thou knowest well what it is."

"Alas! how can I know, rude man-at-arms as I am, what may be the wishes of one who might be rather a celestial than a terrestrial being."

"Thy words are fair. Wot ye not what saith our Scottish proverb, 'The Southron is ever fair and false?'"

Emboldened by her mildness, Heselrig continued to pour forth honied words, which indeed he had always at command, until she again said—"Still dost thou ask what I lack. I lack that for which the captive ever sighs; that which men of the nobler stamp would risk life to win—that without which life is misery. I lack liberty!"

"Alas!" said Heselrig, with a sorrowful look.

"That for which this land is arming," continued she, with increasing animation—"that which the tyrant of England hath driven from our once happy

country! and which his minions, not contented with the general calamity, grudge, in its most limited sense, to our women!"

Here Dora, behind Heselrig's back, made a sign to her lady, which she understood, and instantly lowered her voice.

"Lady," said Heselrig, "all that I can do, and at the risk of great misfortune, shall be done to lighten the restraint that is imposed on thee by the Lord Governor. Wouldst thou walk? within the Castle walls each space is free to thee! Wouldst thou ride? lo! the fields are open, and my managed steeds are ready at thy call. Deign only to listen to the humble suit of one who would die to stand well in thy favour." So saying, he knelt before her. "See! Lady, thus humbly do I bend for but one smile—one token of goodwill to the most devoted of thy lovers!"

"Lover!" cried she, involuntarily; and turning away, she again caught the imploring face and the friendly signal of Dora.

"It is known to my fair guest, that the Lord Governor, in his quality of King's representative,

hath assigned to me the marriage of his beautiful ward; but I seek no right in this act of kingly power; on thy favour alone I wish to rest the fortune of my suit."

"Rise, Sir Knight!" exclaimed she; "I shame me that thou hast kept that attitude so long. Thy words are fair and knightly; so much must be allowed; and if thou wouldst act as well as thou canst speak, Marion of Lammington would say she had met a noble Englishman."

"What action in my power would draw commendation from the lady of my heart?"

"Set me free!" cried she. "Set me free! then mayest thou say thou art chivalrous and generous; and then might a maiden, without a blush, avow that such a man were worthy of being allowed to win her esteem; but when a Knight addresses such speeches to a captive within his hold, what do they savour of but insult and wrong?" Her eye flashed, and her form became more erect as she spoke. "If thou wouldst have an answer from me, I tell thee it will still be, Give me freedom! Pent up here, and forced to listen to thy sugared words, I may not give free vent to my thoughts."

" And where wouldst thou desire to go in times so perilous?" enquired Heselrig. " The land is covered with lawless men, who seek to raise up strife and bloodshed, under the specious name of freedom; and the Lord Piercy doth hold thee safe only in a royal fortress."

" Set me free! What matters it where I am if I breathe the pure and happy air of freedom? The wild moor, the forest, or the fell, are alike to me; and I fear no evil there. Where is the wildest Scot who would harm a homeless maiden?—No, Southron! such men are to be found only among the followers of thy King within the bounds of Scotland."

" Thou must have kind friends, lady, among these men of the wilderness, who are but thieves and robbers in our estimation," said Heselrig, now standing up, and beginning to observe that she was putting a restraint on herself during the interview.

" Thieves and robbers call you them? Those do not rob who take only their own. Those you style robbers will be famous in the annals of all nations,

save England, as the saviours of their country! and in Scotland their names, in after ages, shall fill every nook and corner of the land, until they are as familiar to each good man as those of his children."

"Lady," said Heselrig, "thou dost wrong in thus identifying thyself with the cause of the most notorious rebel who hath, in these times, stood up against his liege." The real man was now coming out, in spite of his desire to be the courteous Knight throughout this interview; for he observed that she bore his flowery addresses with impatience; and the desire to know in how far she was engaged with his rival, induced him to make this pointed allusion to him; and his brow lowered as he saw the flush of indignation that crossed her visage.

"Who is it that Sir Arthur Heselrig doth deem so debased and criminal?"

"Even one William Wallace, the outlaw," replied he.

"One William Wallace! sayest thou. One William Wallace! Thou sayest true unwittingly, Southron. There is only one William Wallace!

for if you search wide Britain, and Ireland to boot, thou wilt not find a man to compare with him."

"Ha! is it so? Thou hast known him then, this proscribed man?"

"Proscribed? sayest thou, and by whom, I pray you? By the most bloody and selfish tyrant who ever disgraced a throne. By him who deems every man injurious who will not pour out his blood for him, and place the despot's foot on his neck; who shall have any will but his, and whose very life is not held of him? Proscribed! If Wallace proscribed this foreign invader, who hath dared to destroy the liberties of his country, he might be justified; but what law, what equity, can sanction the proscription of a man defending his own property from a stronger foe, who desires to take it by force?"

"Enough! lady, thou hast said enough to convince me that it would be unsafe to trust thee beyond the walls of the Castle."

Poor Dora's signs were now all unheeded, for Marion's feelings were roused, and at the thought of Wallace, all dread of consequences vanished from her mind.

"Thou canst do no more than thou hast already done, unless thou shalt slay us outright."

Heselrig's brow was black as the thunder-cloud. "It is true, then, that this forest-tramper, this captain of thieves!—It is true that the infamous Wallace is the favoured lover of the Lady of Lammington?"

"What right hast thou to question me? I deign no answer to such insolence! But thou mayest be well assured, I know the difference between William Wallace and Sir Arthur Heselrig, Sheriff of Lanark and Lord of its Castle," replied Marion with a look of lofty scorn.

"It is enough," said Heselrig fiercely, "we shall brook no disdain from the affianced of an outlaw, whom we chased from our gates but yesterday, like a hunted hart, and shall yet catch to grace our doom-tree."

"Now, thou art like the Heselrig I always knew! But think not to quell my courage with thy threats; thou wilt find me suited to the high place thou hast allotted me, and fit to stand by the side of him who is the first of men." She paced the apart-

ment, like an angry Princess provoked by the insolence of a subject, as she bowed her head gracefully and majestically, to intimate her desire that he would take leave; which he did forthwith, all his fierce and turbulent passions roused by the scene, and his hatred of Wallace contending with the love he felt for her—"for even in him it asked the name of love."

During the whole interview, the Physician remained in the apartment, and regarded with a stern eye the discussion between the principal parties; but it shewed how favourably he had induced these captives to think of him, when the timid Dora, alarmed by the tone of defiance adopted by her lady, and the gloomy looks of Heselrig, drew near to him as if for support; and he, contrary to what might be expected from his forbidding aspect, heeded her not, his eye being bent unceasingly on Heselrig and the lady. They now withdrew, and Heselrig beckoned Galbraith to follow into a private apartment, where he gave full vent to his wrath and disappointment.

"It is in vain, Galbraith, to sue to this proud

damsel! her whole heart is fixed on the man. Perdition sieze him!"

Galbraith shook his head, while Heselrig walked the room to gain some degree of composure, and at length he spoke more quietly.

"Thou has told me, in our many conversations, that there are among the mysteries of nature strange herbs which cast over the mind oblivion of the past, and leave it a blank for any new impression."

"Such there are certainly, and the growth of this land."

"Dost thou not think, then, my friend, that it were well to lose no more time in kneeling to the proud beauty while this villain—curses on him!—doth hold her captive, but try at once thine art to erase him from her memory."

"As my lord chooseth, it shall be done; but be aware of the full consequences of this powerful medicine; it affecteth not the citadel of life, yet, natheless, it doth sometimes rest as a cloud on the mind for ever."

"But it doth not affect the beauty of the form?"

"It doth not; but the bright corruscations of intellect, which in this youthful lady are remarkable, would be altogether quenched by it, and she would become feeble as an imbecile."

"Tut, man! she would be the better for it. Seest thou not she is too vain of her body and mind both?"

"I speak to acquire knowledge for my guidance. My path is plain, if the body alone is to be heeded, and I have free permission to operate on the mind."

"Thou hast. It is her corporeal frame I desire; and so thou dost not make her a driveling idiot, thou mayest do as thine art doth direct, in regard to her mind; but, on thy life, mar not the beauty of her form."

"Enough! Those herbs must be gathered at midnight, while the moon is full, and the dew upon them. This very day are her horns complete; and the work must be done this night."

"Even so let it be! Folkham will give instructions so that thy egress and ingress, at all hours, may be unobstructed. By Heaven! if this matter

shall end in disappointment to me, it shall at least bring me revenge on the cause of it! and Wallace shall feel, in his inmost soul, retribution for my wrongs."

Thus, like other selfish and unprincipled men, he induced himself to think that he was ill-treated by Wallace, the betrothed husband of the lady whom he sought, by such foul means, to estrange from him. The physician perceived the nature of that love which his lord cherished for the fair prisoner, and, doubtless, resolved that the practice of his art should have unlimited scope on her, in hopes that his fee would correspond with the work accomplished. He was fully aware that men of all ranks believed in the almost unlimited power of medicine, especially when it was drawn from its source in the silence and darkness of night, and brought into use with many forms and ceremonies, which implied that there was a secret charm in the article, like a living spirit, that could only be evoked by such practices. Heselrig could not look on the cloudy, thoughtful, and mysterious aspect of the Leech, without having his faith in the

power he possessed over the secrets of nature fully confirmed; and he felt inward comfort in the good fortune that brought him such a powerful ally. It was doubtful if he himself knew how far he wished to go to gain his ends; but Galbraith understood, from what had just passed, that it was himself he regarded, not the victim of his schemes, in considering the extent of the latter.

Heselrig remained in a moody and discontented state for some hours after this interview, but towards the afternoon an incident occurred which gave a new direction to his impetuous passions. While he was brooding over his disappointment, a page entered to announce the arrival of a party which had been sent to scour the country, and with a prisoner in their train. "Some refractory churl, doubtless?"

"No, my Lord; hé is a wild, rude-looking man, but is said to be of note. He is called Angus."

"What! Angus of Cumnock?—Red Angus?"

"The same."

"Blessed fortune! Tell Foster to bring him in."

The page withdrew, and soon afterwards a 'squire entered, followed by two or three men-at-arms, who had in charge the unhappy Angus. The latter looked more than usually excited, but spoke not until the news of his capture had been fully detailed.

"How was it, Foster?" enquired Heselrig, without deigning a word of greeting to the captive.

"We were skirting the forest near Lesmahagow," replied Foster, "and our dogs had just started a deer, when this man, accompanied by some half dozen equally wild, came forth, apparently in pursuit of the same animal. As we were not there to hunt, but merely had our hounds, as is the custom, we would have passed on and left them, had I not been struck by the resemblance which these men bear to the description given of Red Angus's company. I questioned him, and he replied by winding his horn; so without more ceremony, I ordered my men to seize him, which they did with difficulty, for he fought like a fury, and hurt three of them before he could be secured. His followers backed him stoutly, but

fled when better could not be—we being five to one at least."

"And thou hast done right. I know this man to be a chief of outlaws—art thou not, fellow?"

"Who asks?" demanded Angus, in a voice that caused them all to start.

"The noble Sir Arthur of Heselrig, captain of this strength," said Foster; "so demean thyself properly."

"Heselrig!" cried Angus, in the same tone, "then it must be the young tyrant, not the old one!—true, it had escaped me, he is away."

Heselrig bent his brows as he replied, "We shall find means to tame thy spirit and teach thee respect to authority, since thou art too rude to know it."

"Art thou he who stormed my hold in Afton, or tried to do so? And art thou he who carried off my child? Answer me." He seemed bewildered, and his excitement increased as a consciousness of his situation came fully upon him. "If it be so, thou art the foulest riever, and at the same time the most pitiful warrior, that ever crossed my path."

"Hold!—knowest thou where thou art?"

"I begin to understand it."

Here Foster menaced him with his hand, and pointed to fetters which a yeoman held ready. "Off, tool of a tyrant!" cried he to the 'squire; then turning to Heselrig—"what hast thou done with my fair child?—Speak to me!"

"When thou art in thy senses I may. At present, thou art not."

Angus glared as if he meant to spring upon him, but a man-at-arms on each side restrained him, and on a signal from Heselrig, he was hurried off to a dungeon. Foster, according to orders, returned after bestowing him properly.

"Thou hast taken a prize, Foster."

"I rejoice that it is so, my Lord," replied Foster, who had but lately come to Lanark; "but he doth seem little better than a madman."

"Only at times, and he hath something now to disorder him; but generally, he hath a mind beyond common, and his prowess in the field is known."

"I can believe in it; but, certes, his intellect doth seem marvellously unstable."

"Folkham shall pay the reward for this capture, which he will tell you hath been offered for some time, and by it thou wilt perceive the importance attached to thy prisoner."

"I knew there was such a person, but believed not he was of much note. I rejoice, therefore, that I have had the good hap to do my lord a service."

"Meanwhile, do thyself one, by reaping the reward."

CHAPTER VI.

"Certes," sayd he, "I n'ill thine offered grace,
Ne to be made soe happy do intend,
To them that list, these base regards I lend;
But I, in arms and in atchievements brave,
Do rather choose my flitting hours to spend,
Than to be lord of them that riches have."

Faery Queen.

WALLACE, after parting from the woodman, pushed on directly for his camp, which he reached in about two hours, and found in some confusion, from his absence. It was known that he had gone on a most perilous enterprise, and that, if he had been successful, he should have returned before nightfall. The anxiety of the leaders was therefore at its height when he appeared. But, in addition to his absence, they had a cause of uneasiness in the arrival of a messenger from his uncle, Sir Ranald Crawford, who would deliver his

tidings to no one but Wallace. In a small apartment of the timber building, he found the chiefs of his band, some of whom were only occasional visitors, during the darkness of night, not having yet fairly broken with the Southron government.

They started upon seeing him, eagerly asking if he was safe, and what had chanced. In few words he explained every thing.

"By my faith, Wallace," said a stalwart swarthy-faced and black-haired man, "this must not be again; we cannot jeopardize thee in this manner!"

"Noble friends," replied Wallace submissively, "ye all know why I deemed this secret expedition necessary, not less for the public good than mine own private ends. But I may say, that had the former not been likely, I should have cast aside all individual feeling."

"We know it," replied the same man, who was William the Hardy, Baron of Douglas; "we know thy disinterested nature, brave Wallace, but we know also, that wert thou lost, our enterprise must be naught—there is not one among us who would not venture anywhere."

"Yea but, gallant Douglas," said Wallace with a smile, "few are so well practiced in these masquerading tricks; that is why I choose not to risk my friends, most of whom are all unpractised in the business. Could I but find my lost henchman! he is more wily and expert, even than I, but I can gain no tidings of him."

"A suspicion hath arisen," said another, "that he is in league with the Southron. Some say he was seen in Lanark only some few days agone."

"Pshaw! my friend, thou mightst as soon believe that my right hand would betray my left," replied Wallace with some heat; "but no more of this! Let us hear what this post from mine uncle hath to say."

The man appeared. "Say thy message; these are all my friends, and privy to every thing."

"My lord told me to speak only to the Chief; but if it is as thou sayest, my news can be soon told. These are his words; tell my nephew I shall be in his leaguer to-morrow at noon, to deliver to him a message from the Lord Governor."

"Thou mayest retire," said Wallace. "What

can this wily Piercy want now, that he employeth such a respectable ambassador?"

"If it is a proposal for truce," said Douglas, "I rede that it be received, and it is likely that he may propose such a thing, to give time for the men to arrive from England."

"And why should we agree to it," said Sir Andrew Murray, the Lord of Bothwell, a fair-haired young man. "Methinks—but I bow to the judgment of abler men—methinks, Douglas, it were poor policy to give time for that purpose."

"Not if Scotland is more likely to send forth men than England on this occasion. Edward is hampered by Normandy and his French possessions, which trouble him more than he doth relish, while the noise of Allanton hath awakened every Scot from Berwick to Shetland. What sayest thou to that, brave Bothwell?"

"Time enough to discuss this to-morrow, when mine honoured uncle doth arrive. Perhaps it may be of far different sort, the Piercy's mandate; for such, in my poor judgment, it is likely to prove; sooth to tell, I expect no peaceful overture."

"Thou wilt be in the wrong then, mark me! Wallace, I know these Southrons and all their wiles. Thou dost know them also; but hast not experienced them as I have, at least to the full extent." Now it is not improbable that they may be deceived by the seeming quiet which prevails here, though we know it is the lull that precedes the storm. They may imagine that the discontent is confined to the western shires, and expect to crush it by an overwhelming force."

"More likely," said Wallace, "they know the state of Scotland. Trust me, there are few things unknown to Piercy; and, if we allow them sufficient time, they will bring powers from every part of England, France, and Ireland, to subject the land, from one end to the other."

At noon next day arrived with a suitable retinue the Baron of Loudon. He was met by all the chiefs then in the woods, of Wallace's party, in a glade just off the public road from Glasgow to Lanark; for it was not judged prudent to admit all who were in the train of Sir Ranald into the camp. Wallace advanced respectfully, and

warmly embraced his venerable relative, who received him with equal cordiality, whispering, unheard by any other person, "Have a care; there be some of Piercy's here." Then, assuming a stately look, "Thus far, fair kinsman, have I yielded to the dictates of nature; but the duty I have now to discharge must cause me to forget everything, saving that thou art the captain of a host arrayed against sovereign authority."

"I pray you, Sir Ranald, enter this woodland bower, where we may discourse concerning the purport of thy visit more at ease."

"Right willingly, so my friends may enter with me," replied he.

"Choose who shall share our councils," said Wallace.

Sir Ranald then selected a certain number from his followers, including two of the Lord Governor's 'Squires, who were ostensibly sent, to shew that the embassy emanated from him, but, in reality, to observe and report all that passed.

Sir Ranald knew every one of the leaders with whom his nephew was accompanied; but they,

who were cased in armour, and had their vizors down, behaved to each other as perfect strangers throughout. He opened the business by stating, that the Lord Governor thought it of advantage that a truce should be established for a short space, in order that the misguided men who had sought the forests, for the purpose of keeping themselves there, to the annoyance of all true lieges, might have time to see the folly, and repent them of the iniquity of their ways; "for," said Sir Ranald, "thus saith the King, 'So sure as trees grow and rivers run, I will bend them to my yoke."

"If thus thy address to the chiefs of Scotland is to run," said Douglas, sternly, "I advise thee, ambassador of English Edward, to wend thee back in time."

"Hush! my friend," said Wallace, "the person who comes on the peaceful errand of a sovereign, whoever he be, must be respected."

"Granted," replied Douglas, "always provided he doth comport himself as may become the party to whom he is sent."

"Whoever thou art," said Sir Ranald, "I will

do my message fairly, and without fear of consequences. Thou knowest me not, or thou wouldst not think otherwise."

All the leaders of Wallace's party had started up, along with Douglas, and had assumed the same bold attitude of defiance.

"We cannot listen," said Auchinleck, who was one of them, "to language which only would be becoming in a Saracen Emir to his slaves; and I tell thee, the emissary of Edward of England, that his throne will be shaken, and he himself unseated, ere he bend the people of this country to his will."

While he was speaking, Wallace kept his eye steadily fixed on his uncle; and when he had finished, he thus addressed him significantly:—"My Lord of Loudon, you may see from the few around me, the spirit that prevails among our Scottish knights. From fifty, equal in power and rank to those now here, and they are of no mean note, have I like assurance of resolution, to resist to the uttermost the tyrant of Scotland. This I had not stated, did not the haughty and imperious mandate which hath been delivered, demand a

reply in suitable terms to its own insolent import."

The old man drew himself up as he continued :— "King Edward, while he thus doth intimate his fixed purpose to make his subjects obedient, is nevertheless willing to listen to any complaints, justly founded, that may be brought forward against those who minister for his Highness here."

"Will he change the system of governance, by allowing our lawful King to reign, instead of making him a puppet, as heretofore?" demanded Bothwell.

"I have no power to make terms with you; I have but to speak the King's pleasure and depart. Thus it is farther, and to the end that time may be given to inquire into grievances, he is willing to accord a truce of twenty-one days from this day. I have spoken my message, fair lords; and I demand respect and consideration conforming to the dignity of one who doth represent your King, whilst ye deliberate on it."

"That *you* shall ever receive from us," said Wallace; "whatever be the errand that doth bring

you here, will it please you to withdraw into this other bower the while, and partake of our rude woodland cheer?"

Sir Ranald bowed with great dignity and retired.

"By St Bryde!" said Douglas, the moment the door was shut on them, "the most sharp-witted Southron would detect nothing amiss in the brave old Knight! He hath indeed done his errand like the veriest tool the tyrant hath in Scotland."

"I know what he hath suffered from their oppression," said Wallace, "and that nothing, save the interest of his kinsmen, who are at Piercy's mercy, doth prevent him from joining us at once; yet he but 'bides his time.'"

"I honour him from my heart," said Bothwell.

"And so do we all!" they exclaimed.

"It is pity we cannot unreservedly converse with him; but it would be unwise in such a presence; in fact certain ruin to him, to drop a single word before his Southron followers," said Wallace. "Yet doubtless he will seek some private discourse with me, and I shall make you all partakers of whatever he doth communicate. Now, my friends,

what reply shall we make to this imperious message."

"For my part," said Sir John of Auchinleck, "I think there is much truth and reason in what Douglas said yesterday, and that we are likely to gain more by a short truce than Edward."

"He cannot," said Douglas, "bring his overwhelming powers of horse and foot, together with the immense supplies which such a concourse would demand, in space so short." The debate was carried on for some time with much judgment, and great knowledge of the existing state of the country, and the numbers they were likely to gain in the course of three weeks; but there was much difference of opinion as to the propriety of agreeing to any terms proposed by a prince of so much sagacity and foresight as Edward. Wallace was against accepting the truce proposed, although it wrung his heart to say so, for he perceived at once the position in which his uncle was placed by the wiles of Piercy.

Whilst they were still deliberating, a follower of Sir Ranald intimated that his lord wished to con-

verse in private for a few minutes with his nephew, after the principal business had been arranged.

" Since, then, we are scarcely agreed on this point," said Wallace, " the better course will be to get Sir Ranald's private communication ere we decide."

They all coincided with him in that opinion.

The Chiefs left the apartment, and Wallace returned immediately afterwards, escorting his worthy uncle, who, when they were alone, once more embraced him affectionately.

" God doth know," said he, " my gallant boy, " how all this will end ; but thou hast an old man's blessing for what thou hast already done. Thou seest, William, I no longer affect to check thy ardour, and thou knowest, I doubt not, my real sentiments."

" Perfectly, mine honoured uncle," replied Wallace, " and I always suspected it was so ; but I know that the Crawfords are more obnoxious to this Governor than any other kindred in our shire ; therefore have I always eschewed bringing them into any of my schemes ; and, be assured, it was

with sorrow rather than joy that I received Esplin of Kerse, Hugh of Crawfordland, and Ranald of Torringan, in my leaguer at Allanton."

"They would go, my wise nephew, contrary to the remonstrances of their sires and the commands of their Chief; and we have all felt the consequences."

"But, O mine uncle, why have you undertaken this embassade to us? It is full of peril to thee, of none to me."

The old baron shook his head as he replied, "Further thought hath opened mine eyes to their polity; but when this crafty Governor proposed it, I thought of nothing save the suspicion that would be incurred by declining it. I now see that I shall be, in every way, exposed to suspicion; for thou must and shall act in this matter, entirely irrespective of my safety, kinsman, or thou wilt for ever offend me, and moreover, bring shame upon us all."

"In truth," said Wallace, "we are divided on the subject. Since yesterday have we been engaged in discussing the question; for we readily deduced what would be the nature of a message from the Lord Piercy at this time."

"I am a trusted envoy in the case, and may not advise you, although some men of honour might say that they do not recognise me as a friend, and that this very employment is that of one whom they treat as an enemy; still, I shall not sully my name by even the semblance of dishonour; therefore, my only advice is, heed not my safety—I shall never forgive thee if thou dost."

"Alas! my dear uncle, I know not what to say. I fear even granting what he doth demand would only arouse suspicion also, in a mind like Piercy's; he will suspect thee whatever may be the result of this expedition—but I see you have yet something to say, fair uncle."

"I have, nephew," replied Sir Ranald, looking down, and somewhat embarrassed; "and I almost shame me to speak it, yet it must be spoken and heard—it sheweth, at least, the value which these Southrons put on thee." It was evident that he disliked, or feared, the delivery of the words which were to follow. "Think not, William, that the offer is mine, but regard me only as the brief which conveyeth the information; and, be it remembered,

thou must tell no one of it, or my head pays the penalty. Thus said Lord Piercy :—' If thy nephew will turn him to the king, not only shall his estate of Elderslie be restored, but broad lands, far exceeding those of his family, shall be given in addition ; and furthermore, speedy advancement would be before him, and the avenue opened to the highest offices of state.' "

" My honoured uncle," said Wallace, with a smile, " you need not look so grave in delivering this message. Trust me, it neither flattereth my vanity nor abaseth me in mine own opinion. I know well that men, like Edward of England, and Piercy, his minion, believe such a thing as virtue to be a chimera ; and, above all, the virtue that is based on love of country. Their lives are spent, each in his sphere, in acquiring additional wealth and honours. These they esteem to be the only legitimate objects of ambition ; and they cannot imagine how a man would prefer to them the barren honour of being the chief promoter of his country's liberation from thraldom ; be it mine to shew them that such men are to be found in the world."

"In good faith," said Sir Ranald, I am glad thou dost receive it so gently; but I see too that from such men nothing should be considered as insulting; the first of our land would as readily be exposed to such proffers as the lowest."

"Heed it not, dear uncle, nevertheless an answer must be returned, and let it be briefly the truth, that William Wallace hath devoted himself to Scotland by vows more solemn than any which ever took Christian Knight to Holy Land, and no worldly wealth nor dignity would induce him to break them."

"I know it well, and I said this already to the Lord Piercy; but in all his vast experience of men, that crafty lord hath never met with one who possessed such sentiments, and therefore cannot understand how such could exist;—it will doubtless be lack of argument or inclination in his envoy. I care not how they construe it, for, in good sooth, dear nephew, I am now like a fox in a trap, and can see no way of escape. It had been better perhaps if I had cast myself free of them at once, and taken to the greenwood with thee. It is

but loss of land and lordship to me and my kinsmen; and I begin to perceive that it will come to that at last."

"Nay," said Wallace, "let me entreat you to have no such thoughts, at least until our success hath been confirmed; there are few Barons of your class who have openly joined us, but most of the large ones are precisely in your position. Douglas and Bothwell, who are here at present, are, like yourself, suspected; but, like you, they cannot be proclaimed traitors to Edward, and their lands seized by him, because they have been cautious in their proceedings."

"Well, let us speak of thine own affairs now. I have been even too long about mine,—what of the fair and hapless Marion?"

"She is safe yet—thanks to a kind Providence,—but a fast prisoner in Lanark," replied Wallace with that stern composure which now crept over him at mention of her name.

"Thou knowest of the remonstrance I ventured to make in her favour, and how the proud lord replied that his King would brook no interference between him and his wards."

"I have heard of it, kind uncle," replied Wallace.

"But rest assured, my William," said the old man, with an angry flush, which even the remembrance of his own wrongs failed to call up;—"rest thou assured, that the harsh treatment of that matchless maiden hath done as much as a thousand other acts of oppression to wean from them our true Scottish hearts."

"I know it, my best uncle; and to speak openly, I fear there is nothing but another victory and the capture of Lanark, that will set her free. My country will forgive me if thoughts of myself in connection with her mingle with those of the general weal. The forest is swarming with bold hearts and practised hands to the number of some thousands. Douglas and Bothwell will be ready at an hour's warning, each with a thousand spearmen; but until more arrive, we cannot cope with the great powers at Glasgow and Ayr, and their superior discipline; added to which, this castle is full of men, and too strong for a surprise, to say nothing of the vigilance of the Sheriff."

"Otherwise thou wouldst doubtless attempt it?"

"Can you ask?" said Wallace sternly, almost fiercely. "I would die to get her out of the grasp of that false Knight, whom I distrust grievously, and who, you know, is capable of any atrocity, and has her entirely in his power."

"Can artifice do nothing?"

"No; I have tried every means. Even yesterday I escaped by miracle with life in attempting to establish some intercourse by means of disguise. We have hope of assistance and powerful aid from Argyle and Galloway, from the Border also; but they are watched by the Southrons, and if they stir will be exposed to attack from more numerous bodies. Still they will brave this, and I trust, succeed; for the spirit of Scotland is aroused, my uncle, on her many hills."

They conversed long and earnestly, until interrupted by a forester, who intimated the arrival of a man from the band of Angus, and who, by Wallace's command, was ushered in. "What news?" asked the latter abruptly, seeing the messenger was disordered.

"Our Chief hath disappeared," replied the man sorrowfully. "We hear he is captive to the Southron." He then detailed what had occurred. "He had gone some distance from the body of his followers, and although we made all speed at the sound of his horn, we found nothing on the spot. The few who were with him are carried off also."

"Woe is me!" cried Wallace, when will our cup of bitterness be full? This felon hath now another on whom to satiate his revenge!"

"Nephew, thou must make reprisals; seize some Southron of note! In that lieth the safety of those who are dear to thee," said Sir Ranald anxiously, and in a whisper.

"Thanks for your hint, good uncle. What hath become," said he aloud to the messenger, "of the prisoners taken by thy Chief?"

"The serfs are all good men of the greenwood now, and well armed with spear and shield."

"That I know; I mean the gentlemen whom you took?"

"There be only one left; for our Chief let the rest go, after exacting a mulct for their harshness

to the slaves; but this one he would on no account allow to depart; he is called De Brito."

"I fear he is too inconsiderable—a poor laird of this neighbourhood, with a bad heart and a weak head, whom our friend made captive for his cruelty, and because he boasted himself of Piercy's kin."

"I know not the name," said Sir Ranald; "but he cannot be so nearly allied to Piercy as to interest the latter in him; and I think his Norman name and blood alone can scarcely have that effect, even with him."

"Uncle, I must see to this misfortune at once. Some one must be sent to these men of Cumnock, as we were wont to call them, but now they are from all quarters."

Wallace left the bower hurriedly, but soon returned. "I have sent," said he, "for my faithful Ker of Kersland, whom we call Kerlie, to bear my instructions to our Lesmahagow friends."

"I know good Kersland well—he is brave and trusty," said Sir Ranald; "couldst thou but light on that proud bishop, who doth lord it in costly mail at Glasgow, thy mind might be at ease about the captives of the Southron."

"You say true, but Bishop Beck rideth not abroad, without the following of a king, as indeed do most of the great Southrons. I fear Heselrig will have little mercy on Angus, for he hath his own overthrow to avenge, and he is a man to lay hold of such opportunity."

On the capture of Angus being reported to the assembled Chiefs, a change took place immediately in their discussion, for those who were opposed to the truce, readily avoided their consent to it, provided an exchange of prisoners was to take place while it lasted.

They laid hold of Angus's misfortune as a cover to get Marion out of Heselrig's hands, without offending Wallace's nice sense of honour; and accordingly they announced to him their resolution, under the condition of captives being admitted to exchange or fair ransom. Wallace did not offer any remarks; but turning to his uncle, desired him to carry the communication to the Lord Governor precisely as his chiefs and leaders had conveyed their determination to him.

"I will do so," said Sir Ranald; "but it be-

hoveth me to say, that it doth look ill to clog your assent to a royal proposition with a condition of your own."

"We part with you in all courtesy," said Douglas; "for it must be allowed, although thou hast spoken plainly in favour of thy King, thou hast done thy devoir in this affair like a courteous and loyal knight."

All the rest expressed themselves in similar terms; and Sir Ranald, still preserving the manner of one who was addressing perfect strangers, took a formal leave of them all. He seized an opportunity of whispering to Wallace, as he walked by his horse's side, a short way, "Beware of Piercy now! He will dally with thee about this condition, and crave time, which is all he doth want, till it be considered."

"Thanks, kind uncle," whispered Wallace; "and now, Sir Ranald," said he aloud, "my thanks are due for the manner in which thy duty hath been discharged; for, though you have spoken sharply, it was in the way of duty, and so I bid you kindly farewell." They shook hands and parted.

Wallace, who never rested longer than was absolutely necessary in one place, set out with some of his leaders to visit the different positions occupied by him in the woods; for his force had now increased to a size which rendered it necessary to have four separate camps, at proper distances from each other. These were all on the north of the Clyde, except the Lesmahagow division, and two of them were some leagues from that which was nearest to Lanark; yet so situated, that they could succour each other within a very short space of time. But, until he grew still stronger, his chief security lay in the enemy's ignorance, not only of his true position, but of his strength. He had hanged the infamous Baldock with little ceremony in presence of an associate, who was allowed to escape after he had been carried about to places where he saw the figures of about a dozen other men hanging from the boughs of trees.

These were not men, but clothes well stuffed, and so disposed on the trees as to pass for what they seemed. He knew that without some such artifice it would be impossible to screen himself

from the rigorous espionage of Piercy's followers. He caused tales to be circulated in Lanark, besides, of horrible cruelties exercised by him on certain Southrons who fell into his hands. These stories, confirmed by what the spy saw in the wood, effectually kept the boldest from venturing withing the verge of the forest, near one of his camps. Douglas and Bothwell rode off in the direction of Glasgow; wearing, as they always did on those occasions, crestless helmets, and keeping their vizors down till they were far from Wallace's lair, when each took his own way. They were at this period the only powerful chiefs who had taken part with him decidedly, yet were too prudent to commit themselves with the English government until they could no longer help it. The other leaders were knights and barons of less note and influence, but still of rank and estimation sufficient to shew that the vulgar alone were not Wallace's partners in the greenwood.

On the evening of that day, when several of the leaders, with their Chief, were seated in the apartment of the rude bower allotted to them, a buzz

was heard outside, mingled with expressions of surprise. Alive to the slightest sign of alarm, they all arose, and at the same instant, the door opening, Cormack stood before them. "Welcome! most welcome, by St Andrew!" cried Wallace; while the rest also expressed their satisfaction, though in less joyful tones. Cormack looked stedfastly at his master as he spoke.

"And it gladdeneth me also to behold all so well here, and so many noble forms around my Chief, for I have seen strange things since we parted."

"But where hast thou been? and whence art thou?"

"Last from Lanark burgh, where I learned part of what was passing in yon robber's hold."

"And what heardst thou there?" asked Wallace, with an anxious look.

"Nothing in particular of the Lady Marion, saving that she is well in health, though in the power of a false Knight; but men say in the town that the good Chief of Cumnock must soon die to glut his revenge." A hasty expression of

grief and rage interrupted Cormack at this announcement, from all who heard him. "I could hear none of the particulars which gave rise to this rumour; but, knowing the character of the Captain of Lanark Castle, I did deem the tale but too likely to be true. The rest I have to say—for my tale is long—must be told to my master alone. I am under a solemn compact to make my statements to none other."

"Come this way, then, my faithful henchman," said Wallace, "and quickly, for I am impatient to learn thy adventures."

A number of Wallace's band, including one or two of the subordinate leaders, entertained strong suspicions of Cormack's fidelity. These arose out of the mysterious way in which he had disappeared, and the circumstance of his having been seen in Lanark, while he never shewed himself among them. But the greater number held him to be immaculate, and easily accounted for his absence, by thinking over the many perils he would be exposed to in his intercourse with the Southrons, while he was engaged in collecting intelli-

gence from various quarters ; and it was generally believed, even now, when they saw him, that he had just escaped from captivity among the enemy. Yet those who doubted had reason on their side, for such were the rewards paid by Piercy to such traitors, and such the punishment of enterprising Scots who fell into his hands, that it required both great courage and strong faith to withstand them. The event will shew who were the dupes in this instance.

Wallace kept Cormack some hours ere either of them appeared, but when they did so, the expression of the former's countenance struck all the beholders immediately. Ever since the captivity of Marion, he had been grave and stern until this moment, when his features wore a joyful expression.

" My friends," said he, " what shall I say unto you ? My henchman is bound by a vow, and I am also bound not to reveal to any other person the secrets of his very private and perilous expeditions in our behalf. Suffice it, I am satisfied that he is engaged in exploits which will be of vast importance to our cause."

"It is enough—we ask no more," they all said.

"The idle reports which originated in ignorance of the man, and which have been circulated among us, I cast to the winds; and I declare to you all, that there is no man in whom I place more confidence than Cormack."

So saying he wrung the hand of his henchman, and all his leaders followed the example. If Cormack was a traitor, he was a deep and a bold one, for never did any man cast a more fearless or confiding look around him, as he replied to this expression in his favour.

"I thank you all, noble sirs, and our Chief more especially. This I shall only say—whatever may be the fate of poor Cormack, he will live and die true to his master."

"I swear thou wilt, mine ancient friend; my heart even warms at sight of thee! But true it is, thou must part, and without delay, such is the nature of thy dangerous employment. Credit me, friends," said he again, with sparkling eye, "the work he is engaged in is such as will one day meet your thanks, and most signal praise."

CHAPTER VII.

Lovely and gentle, and distress'd,
Those charms should tame the fiercest beast.
Marmion.

After being convinced that the affections of his captive were settled on Wallace, Heselrig abandoned all hopes of succeeding by fair means. He knew the sex sufficiently to perceive at once, that no fair words nor splendid promises would change the state of Marion's feelings towards him. But the resources of art were still available, and he had some expectation that she might be wrought upon by fear for her uncle, whom he was aware she tenderly loved. Galbraith was his ready and active agent in all schemes relating to Marion; and she, like the shipwrecked mariner, being disposed to cling to any support in emergency, was readily induced to confide to a certain extent in all he said.

Neither she nor her maiden could indure Folkham, but they ever seemed to receive Galbraith with a welcome.

"By the rood," said Folkham, when speaking of this to his lord, "it is passing strange how this man doth captivate every one, even fair damsels, whom his very looks should affiright!"

"It is mind, Folkham," replied the Knight, "the power of enlarged intellect over animate matter."

Folkham stared as if he heard an unknown tongue.

"But thou dost not understand. So send me the Leech; I would speak with him."

Galbraith came, and the gloom increased on his aspect, as if he expected to hear something of serious import.

"Folkham hath told me that thy search hath been successful, and thou didst return with a large bundle of the precious weed."

"Even so, my good fortune hath been great."

"Tell me the course thou art to follow."

"The preparation of the drug will occupy three

days, for it must be thrice exposed to the evening star, and thrice at early morn to the waning moon, and each time are certain charms to be muttered over the herb."

"Nay, my friend," said Heselrig, whose belief did not go quite so far; "thou dost not rely on such mummery, surely?"

"The man who doth cast a doubt on the forms of art," said Galbraith, severely, "is not likely to benefit by it. Faith is necessary."

"I believe in the power of the plant, administered by thine art, and surely that is enough; but go to! have it as thou dost list! Tell me, when wilt thou exhibit the drug?"

"On the fourth day from this shall the first be administered; and if, within two days after, the other potion be not given, the damsel shall sleep with her fathers; but if, in the fortieth and eighth morn, she doth take it, then shall her memory be as a blank in regard to the past."

"Stay! there is risk of death, then, in this medicine?"

"Surely. No potent instrument can be used

for good, without a chance of evil; but we have the remedy in our own hands, and can prevent a catastrophe."

"True—yet it is a risk! The drug is not the same which thou dost use at both periods?"

"No—very different; the first is poison to the body, until counteracted by the other, when it doth assail the mind, but reft partly of its force."

"On the fourth day, then," after a pause, said Heselrig, "shall we proceed. Hast thou told her of our captive?"

"As your Lordship instructed."

"And the result—"

"An agony of grief, such as hath seldom been witnessed," replied the Leech, with a singularly sinister expression of countenance.

"On my word, Galbraith," said Heselrig, "I think thou dost delight in human suffering.

"And why should I not? Have *I* not suffered by the villany of mankind; and should I make men my pets?" demanded the Leech, almost fiercely. "Well! did the damsel then augur evil to this man?"

"She hath fears, unquestionably."

"And well she may. Hark ye, Leech! I delight not in the misery of others, like thee, from hatred of mankind; but, in wreaking revenge, I can gloat on every groan, delight in every tear;—and this Angus hath baffled me, stoned me like a dog, and derided me! and shall he escape me now? No; by the powers of darkness, he shall not!" As he uttered these words, Heselrig's face became as gloomy as that of the Leech; and the expression of mingled rage and hatred was so striking, as even to surprise Galbraith, who gazed on him intently for a few seconds. "I scarcely deemed," said he, "to find the passions so strong in thee; but it is well!"

"Thou dost not think she will bend her mind to my purpose, to save him from a traitor's doom, when she is fully aware that I have authority, and will be lauded for the deed, to execute him at pleasure?"

Galbraith paused ere he replied,—"She is young, and therefore should be pliable; she is a woman, therefore likely to change her mind: but

her principles seem rocks which are immoveable."

"Dost thou mean she is different from all who belong to youth and womankind?"

"Even so; yet I say not her affections are not more powerful than principle. It is marvellous what these workings of Nature will do with the weaklings of the world."

"Be it thine to try, Galbraith. Take every chance ere we resort to thy drug."

"Thou dost undervalue this inestimable gift," said the Leech, "or thou dost fear it. Know, Sir Knight, it will put the damsel's lands entirely in thy power, for thou mayest marry her forthwith, without fear of repulse."

"But thou didst pledge thyself that the beauty of her form should be unimpaired."

"I did. In so far as the body is not affected by the mind; the herb shall not wither a rose of her bloom, nor darken the lily of her skin; but the light of intellect that giveth charm to feature, I did say, would become dim."

"Still the features continue as before. But it

is in vain to disguise my thoughts from thee;—since I saw her inclinations run after the outlaw chief, my desire hath been rather to obtain her estate than her person; but he—that hated king of thieves—must never call her his! Seest thou not, 't were easy for me to get her broad lands, by letting her go to him,—they would be forfeited, and in the gift of Piercy, and surely mine; but that would not suit my thirst for revenge. I must have her lands, while she is kept apart from him; and there is no way perhaps but to wed her, and treat her as many a fair one hath been already."

"And by you, too," said the Leech.

"True, Leech, I have used them, as strong men use the weak, for my pleasure and my ends; and when they no longer suit, like a prudent and thrifty housekeeper, I turn them adrift, to shift for themselves. How now! thou dost turn away from me! What! hath this revelation taken thee by surprise? Am I more like to thyself than thou didst imagine? Come! there must be no disguise between us. I know thee to be one who hath sold himself to perdition, by acts so foul, that men

have shuddered at thy name. I have heard thy story."

Galbraith fixed an alarmed look on him as he spoke. "Thou art known to me as one whose black deeds have made him the accursed of mankind, even as the black Monk of Crossraguel, Halbert the poisoner—ha!" The Leech shuddered as he again turned aside, but spoke not. "Thou dost wisely to say nothing. Think not I mention thy past life as a reproach; I know thou art not so bad as men deemed thee, yet sufficiently so for my purpose. Now that I find thee in my power, I can, with less hesitation, place myself in thy hands. Dost thou not see there should be no reserve between us? Speak frankly."

"Frankly, then," said the Leech, with a disturbed look; "I shall not deny what hath been said; but poisoner am I none, save of a wretch on whom it was necessary to wreak revenge; and who gainsays my right to the latter? Not thou, man of evil, who might pass for the incarnation of its very spirit."

"Not I, indeed, so look not so ferocious. We

understand each other now, and must act as people who feel and judge alike."

"It is true; but tell me how hath my secret become known?"

"Nay; that is my secret, friend. Hereafter, I may let thee know, but not just yet. Heed me well! Yet it is almost needless to warn thee, for I think thou dost know me. If thou dost deceive me in aught—if thou dost palter with me in the practice of thine art—or if thou dost divulge one word of our discourse, at different times, it had been better for thee that the monks of thine abbey had buried thee alive, as they did purpose."

Galbraith raised his eyes to Heselrig's face, and quickly withdrew them; for he saw there depicted the passions which make fiends of men, and in such vivid characters, that he could not doubt for a moment the individual before him was capable, when under their sway, as he seemed to be then, of the greatest atrocities; yet he replied firmly,—"Had I feared thee I had not set my foot in this Castle, nor had I entered into familiar converse with one whom I knew right well for months bye-

gone. There are few men so ignorant of the true character of Sir Arthur Heselrig as the Lord Piercy."

"I have power over him, and by that thou mayest know, that I possess a charm which thou, with all thy moon-hatched plants, hast not over the human mind. It is unnecessary to say more; thou knowest me and thou fearest me."

"Even so let it be," said Galbraith with a sigh, as if he felt himself in presence of one who could overawe and, by his superior mind, control him; "I bend me to thy will in all things; nor do I claim any equality, of whatever nature it may be."

"So! be faithful and silent, and, as my fortunes flourish, so shall thine. Trust no one here! Folkham is a brave fool, and inclineth to believe thou art a conjuror; and there are many others who have similar opinions. Keep the one thing in view—my service; for in attending to it, thou art rearing the fabric of thine own exaltation." He withdrew, leaving the physician with his arms folded, his eyes fixed on the floor, and his brow

contracted, as if lost in painful and deep rumination. After some minutes passed in this manner, he raised his eyes, cast a cautious glance around, and slowly retired to his sequestered turret.

The hapless Marion, like the lamb before the butcher, was utterly unconscious of any machinations against her. She distrusted Heselrig, and believed him to be capable of great crimes, but she believed that, with the views he entertained, it was his interest to treat her with some show of civility, even if he resented her coldness and disdain, from fear of offending his superior, the Lord Governor. But she knew not the length to which passion could carry an individual, whose ill-regulated mind was unaccustomed to the wholesome control of judgment; nor could she imagine that hatred of Wallace, in one like Heselrig, might become a passion, stronger than any that could actuate him, and sufficient to displace other feelings, especially if Wallace crossed him in, and interfered with the latter. And she felt that her unhappy uncle had nothing connected with his position which could

make it Heselrig's interest to preserve him; and as the latter never forgot what he considered an injury, she was racked by fear and anxiety. It was after an interview with her, and some hours after the conference between Galbraith and Heselrig, that the former again sought the presence of the Sheriff. "I have been with this damsel," said he, "but to speak truth, I cannot understand what she would have, or whether she doth incline to go any length to save her kinsman."

"Dost thou really think she would listen to it?" asked Heselrig eagerly. "That would be a triumph over her beyond my hopes."

"She did not break out into anger when I mentioned it, nor did she look proud and disdainful."

"What dost thou counsel then?"

"It doth seem meet and good that you present yourself to her, and in plain but humble and respectful terms, as true knight should use to his lady fair, represent the great danger to be incurred by preserving this noted outlaw from justice, and that it would not be reasonable to expect it without some reward."

"Something mercantile in that though, my friend," said Heselrig; "but put it as we will, it must have an appearance of pedlar traffic; so even let it be! Be it mine to make the words suitable."

An hour afterwards, he was received by Marion, and began, as on other occasions, with wishes and flowery compliments. "Truly, dear lady," said he, "thou art paler than before, and thy looks are more disquieted. I trust no return of this cruel fever—"

"None, but there is a fever of the mind, Sir Sheriff, which doth blanche the cheek and thin the blood more felly than mere corporeal ills."

"Grieved am I that such should fall to thy lot, lady, if they be in my power to remove—"

"They are in thy power; and oh, if you be a man moved by the feelings of ordinary mortals, respect the feelings of the child for her parent! Such are mine to thy captive! Respect the infirmity with which Heaven hath been pleased to visit him! Restore him to freedom, and thousands will bless thee, to whom thy name is now as that

of a foeman, and I will guarantee thee and the Southron power against all aggression from him hereafter. I too will bless thee, Heselrig, and forgive thee!" Tears fell fast as she knelt at his feet in supplication for her uncle. Heselrig cast a momentary glance, full of hope and triumph, on her suppliant form, and, hastening to raise her, said, "Rise, fair one! demean not thyself by this posture. God doth know that I would do anything that may come within the narrow compass of my power to win one smile from that sweet countenance; but the commands of my Lord are positive and imperative."

Her eyes, which had been intently fixed on him, were now cast on the ground. "And yet," said she, "the Lord Piercy hath been known to speak well of Angus of Cumnock."

"The Lord Piercy, as a man, will give laud and honour to him whose reputation is high for valour and for learning. Such were the attributes of this gentleman whom chance hath thrown into my power; but the Piercy, as King Edward's officer, is sworn to do justice on all offenders against the royal authority."

She heaved a profound sigh. "Then my hopes are vain," said she.

"No," replied Heselrig, passionately, and throwing a degree of earnestness and truth into his manner, which only an accomplished dissembler could get up for the occasion. "No, sweet lady! There is one way left, and I will undertake to save him, though the risk be great, if thou wilt sanction the proceeding." She turned away a little as if conscious of what was coming, and he went on. "If this prisoner were known to be near me, in alliance, neither the Lord Piercy nor the King would enforce me to execute justice on him. Thou seest what I would say, though fear doth almost choke my utterance."

Here he fell on his knees and remained silent. A flush of indignation shot across her face as he remained with his eyes bent on the floor at her feet, like a criminal expecting his doom; but she quickly controlled herself and spoke calmly.

"Sir Arthur Heselrig, thou knowest the state of my mind, and also that I am the promised bride of another. I see not on what ground thou canst

plead thy cause, for surely it were sin to break my plighted troth."

"Not so! I grant if he to whom thy word was given remained the same person, thou couldst not with honour. But he was then a youth of promise, high in the estimation of all; now he hath lost his place in the world's esteem, and is an outcast from the society of good men, even an outlaw."

She had motioned him to rise, and he stood before her as he spoke, his harsh features working with an emotion which he could not suppress, at thought of Wallace, and she withdrew her face to hide the evidence of her own anger and disgust as she replied,—"Such casuistry, Sir Knight, can scarcely avail with me, a Scottish maiden, who hath ever boldly and openly maintained thy King to be Scotland's usurper."

"But the fact I have stated, lady, is incontrovertible. The tie of affinity will be recognised by the Governor, when he would laugh me to scorn for advancing any other plea."

"And thou dost believe the end would sanctify the means in the sight of Heaven?"

"Surely! Nay more, we are commanded not to kill, and he or she who can prevent killing and taketh not the measures, doth sin against the commandment."

But she was too acute to be caught by this hollow sophistry.

"Then if killing the captive be, as thou sayest, sinful, thou shalt be a murderer."

"Not so, fair Lady, I believe he doth deserve to die, and that the meed is due to his rebellion; but thou dost think him innocent, and yet doth permit him to die—"

"And thou art clear that the lesser sin is to break troth, and wed one whom—"

Here Dora, unseen by Heselrig, gently touched her back, as her voice was involuntarily rising into a tone of defiance,—"I have had reason to look upon as a foe. Hold! Sir Knight! Speak not until I have finished. I must have time to deliberate on this proposal; thou canst not expect it shall be otherwise, that I should change my way of thinking in an instant."

"How long, dear lady?"

"I ask but three days," said she, afraid to have her boon denied by demanding too long a respite for her uncle.

"Then for so long is the captive safe; and may Heaven so turn thy thoughts, that he may remain so for ever!" He withdrew full of hope, but too crafty to shew it.

When he had left the apartment, Dora approached her lady with that familiarity which had long prevailed between them.

"Thou hast done well," said she, with a smile. "Wonderfully! I saw the deceiver was truly deceived, for his fell eye twinkled as he left thee."

"I am glad it is so, Dora," said she with a sigh; "but I almost shame me of even this deceit, fair and forced though it be."

"Remember the words of him who would never give wrong counsel; 'think it no dishonour to deceive him by any wile whatever.'"

"True, my Dora, he said so, and that doth comfort me. To what wiles hath he not been reduced in his country's cause!"

"And think still, if thou canst gain time to get

a pardon from the Governor—what happiness hereafter !"

"O for some means to communicate with Wallace. Yet he must know there is no other way to save him. But what can *he* do with this Governor?"

"Lady," said Dora, "I bethink me, the young knight who was taken by our Chief and liberated; hath, as men say, spoken well of him. Surely he would try to preserve him?"

"That is true, and it is well thought of, we must next devise how we are to get some friend advised of our misfortune, and fully acquainted with all that we know."

"It will be difficult," said Dora, "but not impossible." The two youthful maidens, their wits sharpened by misfortune, then entered into a close consultation, which lasted long, on the best plan for the future, the principal object in the meantime being to save Angus.

The Leech, availing himself of the passport which he now held, and which gave him free passage forth of the castle at all hours, walked out in the direction of the burgh, as if to ponder over the

agitating conversation he had held with Heselrig. He had begun to perceive the impression he had made on the minds of the burghers, who were fully of opinion that he was uncanny, or, in other words, a dealer with the denizens of the world of spirits. But this day it was more strongly marked than ever; he could perceive that they shrank from him in the streets, and hurried away, looking over their shoulders. As he bent his steps towards a house on the north side of the town, where the man resided who introduced him to Heselrig's notice, he was met by three men in a garb of green, who eyed him intently.

"Stephen," said one of them, in a sort of loud whisper, "that should be the Black Leech from the castle; and, by St Andrew, he doth look like one of these large lochgills called by some leeches—black, long, and snakelike!"

"Truly, I think it be," replied another, "and I long to beat him to a jelly; he is the very tool, all men say, of this fell Sheriff."

"Hush! he doth hear you," said the third, a smaller man than the other two. They paused,

in their conversation, but continued to regard the Leech with eyes in which the expression was that of curiosity and disgust blended; while he, in his turn, almost stood still as he scowled fiercely on them.

"What men be ye?" inquired he, "who walk in open burgh, to deride peaceful folks?"

"Parley not with the wretch," said Stephen, "but come along."

"Think ye I know ye not? Dwellers 'neath the greenwood tree! Fie, that honest men in open street should be flouted by such knaves! But the Sheriff is just riding through burgh with a goodly following, and we shall soon see something!" As he spoke, the trampling of many steeds was heard on the other side of the small town, and the two larger men, without farther speech, turned suddenly down a narrow lane or close and disappeared.

The little one lingered a moment, as he said, "Thou hast done us a good turn without meaning it; I pray you, whom dost thou take us for?"

"For thieves, and followers of Wallace. Hold, villain! fly me not! yield thee my prisoner! Lo, the Sheriff is at hand!"

The other, quick as lightning, eluded his grasp, and aimed a blow at the Leech, which the latter evaded, and, closing with the forester, wrested the quarter-staff from his hand, and struck him smartly over the shoulders with it. Without a moment's further delay, the latter ran after his companions; for the sound of horses' feet was now coming closer.

The Leech followed eagerly, and passed down the narrow lane in pursuit, but not before he had been observed by Heselrig, who met him, as he returned, with the demand of whom he wrangled thus with.

"Even with a knave, who hath been over insolent; but I have taken his staff, as a sign and a token that a man of peace may wield offensive weapon."

Heselrig replied with a smile, in which his followers joined,—"Truly, we did not expect to find thee expert in arms; but who is the man?"

"As I guess, an outlaw, and man of Wallace."

"St George, man! why didst not say so at first? Follow, search, and take him!"

The Leech, who was panting from lack of breath, assured him it would be in vain; for "those servants of the devil," said he, "have all his cunning." Nevertheless the search was continued some time in the direction pointed out by Galbraith, but, as the latter prophesied, without success.

"Every day some of these overbold thieves appear in burgh," said Heselrig. "We must take other measures to seize them."

And so saying he rode on, while the Leech quietly proceeded to the domicile of his friend.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate Angus was closely pent up in a dungeon, to him the severest punishment that could be inflicted; for the free range of the forest had been long identified with his nature, and the fresh breeze of the wilderness was literally the breath of his nostrils. Marion had preferred a petition to see him, before her last conversation with Heselrig; but the latter declined to grant it, on the ground that he was so wild and incoherent, that such a scene would drive him to furious madness. This Galbraith confirmed; and his opinion

was received as conclusive. But the dungeon was fast reducing him to a state of quiescence corresponding to his previous excitement; and it might soon be possible and prudent (the Leech averred) to permit the desired interview, in which case the good Sheriff would doubtless gratify the lady in the manner she desired.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our plot's as good a plot as ever was laid,
A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation.
HENRY IV.

THE Lord Piercy received the report of Sir Ranald Crawford with that caution which formed a striking feature in his character, putting various questions to his envoy, to elicit farther information, or to have what had been already given more fully explained—without betraying the slightest emotion; and when the old baron had satisfied him, as far as he could, on every point, before those who may be called his privy counsellors, he declared aloud, that the mission had been well and faithfully performed. "Touching," said he, "the condition which the *outrecuidance* of these outlaws brought forward, it was not entertained by

the Baron of Loudon, but he could not prevent it from being made. Of that hereafter; and now be pleased, Sir Ranald, to follow into my cabinet."

When they were quite alone, in this secluded closet, Piercy, as on a former occasion, threw aside his official air of dignity, and spoke in a friendly tone,—"Thou hast done fairly, my friend, and this condition is, in reality, no drawback on thy treaty, as can be easily shewn. But to the secret and more important object of thy journey."

Sir Ranald shook his head as he replied,—"I did assure your Lordship that this part of the business would be a failure; and so, in truth, it hath been."

"Sayest thou so?" said Piercy, knitting his brows, and pacing the apartment in a hurried manner.

"Even so, noble Lord. Thus spoke William Wallace. 'Tell thou the Lord Piercy, that I am devoted to Scotland by a solemn vow, and that no earthly consideration shall move me to break that vow!'"

Piercy stopped suddenly, turning a stern eye on his ambassador.

"And thou didst proffer all I told thee to hold out to him?" inquired he.

"All, my Lord, and almost in the same words, so clearly stood they in my memory," replied Sir Ranald.

Piercy continued his walk, but in evident excitement.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed he at length, as if unable to suppress his astonishment, "this man must be either a downright fool, or stronger than we ween of him."

"I think not," said Sir Ranald; "if I may speak, it is the nature of the youth."

"Pooh! pooh! the nature of him!" cried the Governor contemptuously. The nature of him, mine old friend, as thou well knowest, was to wield a lance, and be a man-at-arms. I pray thee, did this captain ever dream, in his earlier years, of heading an army? Nature designed him for but a lowly part in the world's theatre, and ambition is carrying him beyond his mark. He hath been

too much for thee, my good Loudon ; I accord thee laud and credit for what thou hast done, and blame thee not for want of success in this matter."

Sir Ranald saw that farther attempts to convince the Lord Governor would be fruitless, and therefore remained silent.

" Thou didst not reach his leaguer ? "

" No, that I did not expect."

" Certes he is careful and cautious. Well ! I shall detain thee no longer, my friend. Adieu ! and let me entreat thee to keep vigilant and strict rule over thy kindred."

Sir Ranald retired, fully aware that Piercy's suspicions of an understanding between uncle and nephew were confirmed, and that the good news of the truce being agreed to, on a condition which left the matter entirely in his own hands, alone prevented him from shewing, in no measured manner, his displeasure.

He had no sooner left the cabinet than the followers of the Governor, who formed part of his train to Wallace's camp, made their appearance before their lord. They told him all that had passed

in their presence precisely as it had been detailed by Sir Ranald, but they knew nothing of what had occurred in the long secret conference between the two.

"Ay! there (thought Piercy) much hath been said that I shall never learn; nevertheless, it could not be avoided."

"What saw ye all?"

"Nothing, my Lord," one of them replied, "for we met the outlaws on the forest skirt, near the highway,—there were men of note, from their appearance, with the outlaw chief; but they were armed, and kept their vizors down."

"Doubtless the rebels of Lanark—I have noted them. They shall soon be unmasked," said the Governor, as if speaking to himself; "and heard ye nothing?"

"But little, and that only what seemed to be prepared for us—tales among the yeomen outlaws who waited on the chiefs, of their great strength, and the number of their camps, which we credit not. They had some jests among themselves about tricks played on Southrons, which afforded them

much merriment, such as roasting one at a slow fire till he was burnt to ashes, and hanging another, a minute every hour, until he was worn out, with sundry other pastimes, as they did call them, of a like sort. Marry! I doubt they are not apocryphal."

The rest shook their heads, and looked sad, as if too sure their comrade was right.

"Ye are fools, all of you," said their Lord, impatiently. "These stories are invented, as I told ye before, to scare away scouts from the robber lair; but ye will not be taught. Canst thou not see if one be false, as thou dost declare some of theirs to be, it is most likely all their tales are so. Go to! Speak not among the yeomanry, on your lives, of these idle stories."

Dismissing his spies, the Lord Governor called next into his secret apartment the chosen men of his household, who, since Heselrig's departure, had chiefly partaken of his secret thoughts, in so far as the wily statesman would trust any man with them.

These were, an old knight, who acted as senes-

chal of the Castle, Sir Robert Senhouse by name, and one of his 'Squires, who was called Latimer.

"Come hither," said the Lord Piercy. "I think we have got some tidings this day, which will bring the rebellion to a happy end."

They looked at him in silence.

"You both heard that this outlaw hath agreed to the truce, on condition that prisoners should be exchanged, doubtless with the view of placing this damsel, who is so refractory to our trusty Arthur of Heselrig, in his power; but tell me, friends, would the King's lieutenant be justifiable in bestowing a rich ward of the Crown on a rebel? By my faith, no. She herself, from what I hear, I doubt not, is a rank opponent of England; what then is to be done?"

"Dally with them," said Senhouse; "time is what we require."

"Even so," said the other counsellor; "if we can keep them under treaty, or, in settling the conditions of a truce for fourteen days, our object is gained."

"See now how just and correct my view of

the case must be, when both of you, without being aware of it, come to precisely the same conclusion. Latimer, thou shalt be next the envoy to this prince of thieves; and, I prithee, have all thine eyes about thee; aye, and thine ears! Thou shalt go to-morrow morning; and, as old Loudon hath arranged, a man shall meet you at a certain spot who shall conduct you to him. Thy instructions shall be given after this conference is over. We must prepare to act, promptly and with vigour, for this knave is too sagacious to give us fourteen days, or even the half of that time. This we must do:—we must be ready with a force sufficiently strong to surround him, and annihilate the gang, within a few hours after we declare against a truce. And we have—thanks to their shallow wisdom in clapping this condition to their acceptance of my proposal—the power of ending it when we are sufficiently prepared."

"It is the practice of nations in such cases," said Senhouse, "and held justifiable by the rules of war."

"Justifiable! anything short of perfidy, with a

horde of base scum, congregated against lawful rule, is fairly just and proper. Let me see;—our force at Glasgow is strong; from this garrison and other quarters we can muster a large band: both together quite sufficient for a surprise. Think you, my friends, it will prosper? For, mark ye, if this be done, it is at my own risk, there being no time to consult with King Edward, whose plan is to gather a large force, to crush the whole of this rebellious country at once. Now, if I can effect the same purpose by cutting off the very head and soul of the rebellion, with the other ruling men of it, shall I not deserve good reward and dole of praise from my prince?"

"Surely, my Lord, did the enterprise succeed; but undertaking such without the sanction of a king who directs the movements of his whole army, is riskful."

"Therefore must we be stirring to pour an overwhelming force on them. We have this in our power: all doth depend on ourselves."

Senhouse mused a little. This outlaw chief, men say, is wise and thoughtful far beyond his

age. Think you, my Lord, he hath no secret purpose in this proposal?"

"Thy doubt is natural, and it occurred to myself; but Loudon said—and I have no reason to doubt the fact—that the leaders of the outlaws decided on it among themselves, and without the sanction of the chief, who merely gave in to it on the desire of the rest. Thou seest, in this, their desire to pleasure him, by liberating his lady love; and it doth seem plain that nothing else was thought of."

"So it doth appear, certainly, she being the only captive of their party; and whom have we to exchange—any one, my Lord?"

"None that I am aware of."

"There was," said Latimer, "a 'Squire, taken some weeks ago by the Cumnock men near Lanark."

"True—I had forgotten De Brito; but he is not a prize equal to the Lady of Lammington. So much the better, Latimer—the negotiation will be more protracted."

"The plan," said Senhouse, a cool and calcu-

lating old warrior, "doth promise well, my Lord, and I do not see that the chance of failure is equal to the chance of success, always supposing that this Wallace hath no hidden object."

"What can he have?" said Piercy; "he doth know full well that the different bands he expected to join him are cut off, and prevented from moving, by those we have placed around, to keep them in check. He can hope nothing from delay."

"Yea; but if the spirit of their country be, as some believe it, there wanteth only a fierce outbreak in one quarter to bring out the whole torrent of rebellion, from Solway to Caithness, against us; and then our powers in Scotland are too feeble for their work."

"Thou sayest truly, Senhouse, but we have held down this spirit since Allanton, after which it was at the fiercest; and we can surely do so now, till the blow be struck. All dependeth on this blow: if it be well and effectively struck, adieu for ever to Scottish rebellion! No other Wallace shall ever draw forth the same spirit, and our wise King shall take such order, as will re-

move all troublesome persons, who would mint at walking in his footsteps. He is one who understandeth such matters."

"It were well, my Lord," suggested Senhouse, "that your Lordship should make a progress to Glasgow and Lanark, before the attempt be made, in order that every precaution may be taken to ensure success."

"A good and wise suggestion," replied Piercy; "we shall consider it immediately. How now, Ridley" (to that knight, who then appeared at the door), "hast thou anything to tell?"

"Nothing of importance enough, my Lord, to disturb your deliberations; but if they are over—"

"Say on, and briefly," answered his Lord.

"Walking, just now, outside the gate, a man, who seemed a burgher, accosted me abruptly, asking me if I knew the Chief of Cumnock were captive to Sir Arthur of Heselrig, and doomed by him. On replying that I did not, he assured me it was true, and that the Sheriff of Lanark had sworn he would be justified forthwith."

"Ha! those are good news, Ridley."

"The tidings of the capture of a formidable foe may be good, my Lord," said Ridley, "but I trust your Lordship doth not approve of that justice which doth doom a man of noble nature and repute to die like a dog, without form of trial."

"He hath been a strange and a mysterious man, this Angus MacRie," said Piercy; "and, in former times, his life or his death might have been of no consequence; but, lately, he hath taken to wood and fell, in open rebellion, and I fear me, Sir Richard, the meed awarded is fairly earned."

"I take the freedom to remind your Lordship of this man's behaviour to me;—how he saved the life of an English knight subdued by his prowess, and at his mercy, when it was threatened by his whole band, in retribution of Heselrig's abduction of his niece. Few men, my Lord, have so promptly obeyed a noble impulse, even among the most brilliant chivalry of Europe!"

"Thou dost speak like a very young sprout of chivalry, Ridley," said Piercy, his lip slightly curling; "doubtless there was some mingling of policy in his kindness towards thee."

"What could he expect from me, my Lord?"

"Why, just what he obtained—a warm and zealous advocate." Ridley was silent, internally thinking that his lord could see nothing natural or free from self-interest in the actions of any man.

"Hast thou anything farther to say?"

"Nothing, my Lord, save that the life of this unhappy gentleman would be considered by me as full compensation for any poor service I may, in my humble duty, render your Lordship."

"Piercy, beneath the thick crust of selfishness in which he was encased, and which kept him in the midst of a thousand schemes to gratify it, had, as we have said, a spark of better fire which could sometimes be elicited. He was struck by the earnestness of this young knight on behalf of one from whom he could expect nothing; and, as he gazed on his open handsome face, he thought of his own young days and young feelings, ere the world's cares and turmoils had hardened him into a wily politician. "Ridley, thou art a chevalier as brave as ever charged a foe. Youth as thou art, thy spurs have been fairly won; and gladly would

I grant thee this boon, if it be consistent with duty to my prince. Meantime, until I inquire farther, thou hast my leave to instruct Heselrig to proceed no farther, without command."

"A thousand thanks, my Lord," replied Ridley; "might I suggest that the instructions should come from your Lordship, lest, knowing my mind, the Sheriff of Lanark might take offence?"

"Well! I shall send a post to-morrow concerning this and other matters. Doth that content thee?" Ridley, with glowing face, bowed low, and withdrew.

The Lord Piercy was ambitious of standing well with his sovereign, not only because the latter was the fountain of all honour and the source of worldly wealth and dignity, but because his approbation and his praise were more gratifying to his lofty soul than even more substantial gifts. He was humbled by the severe and sarcastic manner in which he had been handled after Allanton fight, and he burned for an opportunity of shewing Edward that his zeal and ability were equal to the task assigned to him, even in cases of extreme emergency. This opportunity of overreaching and

overpowering Wallace, accordingly, seemed to come to him like the special intervention of Providence in his favour. He would quell the rebellion at infinitely less cost, both of men and treasure, than if Scotland was allowed to go on arming and weapon-showing till she could make a stand against all the power of England. Edward must of necessity be impressed by the promptitude and vigour of his proceedings, and give him praise for not awaiting his consent. "As for failure," thought he, "it is impossible. Wallace cannot by any chance learn our intentions; for they shall be told to none but the three who now understand them. Poh! failure is impossible!"

Sir Ranald Crawford returned to his castle in a desponding mood, and he found there the principal men of his clan in attendance to learn not only the result of his mission to Wallace, in so far as he had power to communicate it, but any particulars that might be gleaned regarding their outlawed kinsman himself. These were all men whom he could trust with his inmost thoughts, the Barons of Kerse, Crawfurdland, Torringan, and other

chief cadets of his family, and Drongan, who never left him, among the rest. They were fully aware of the dangerous position they were in, and that the Lord Governor had his meshes fairly round them, especially since the heir-apparents of several had been conspicuous at Allanton, and some were for throwing off the thin disguise which they wore, and openly joining the cause of the patriots before the approaching battle; but others insisted that they should follow the dictates, and gratify the wishes of Wallace, by refraining from any such declaration of insurrection, which could not fail not only to bring down sudden and perhaps irretrievable ruin on them, even before they could join their kinsman, but imperil the reputation of their Chief, which now stood so high for unsullied honour and integrity. "Better," said this portion of them, "to wait until the affair, in which Sir Ranald hath been mingled, is over; then, if Wallace succeeds, send the Governor a cartel of defiance, with our reasons for renouncing the Usurper." And this party finally prevailed.

Sir Ranald freely told all he had seen and heard

about Wallace, saving the proffered bribe, on which the Lord Governor so confidently relied, and they hung on every word that fell from him. It was evident, besides, that when Sir Ranald mentioned the names of the chief men who were with him, their gratification was mingled with some degree of envy, and it was also clear, that they would all consider it a happy day when their chief should give the word, and set them off in a body to the merry greenwood—casting lands and every thing else, save their wives and families, whom they must contrive some means of protecting, into the scale, which must be turned in their favour, by their own good swords, and those of their compatriots.

The youth of Scotland at this period were actually on fire, and the heat spread to the colder bosoms of their sires. It was extremely difficult for the latter to control their offspring, and to keep them so quiet as to avert the suspicious espionage of the Governor, whose wrath, if the next battle should end in favour of England, would be as a blighting whirlwind, to uproot and

destroy whole families and kindreds of those who had too heedlessly betrayed their feelings and inclinations. The greater number of the larger barons, however, by dint of great authority, and the exertion of severe control, kept their kinsmen and vassals in peace and quietness. The question, properly stated, was not with them, whether, by a simultaneous rising, the next encounter with the Southron was not more likely to be successful, than if it occurred with the present followers of Wallace alone. It is probable that the Scots, under such circumstances, would gain the battle; but the question really was, whether permanent success would not more likely follow on a gradual arming and training of the effective population, than a tumultuous rising of people, badly armed and disciplined, who might, by numbers and headlong bravery, be successful at first, but would, in all likelihood, subsequently fall under their enemies in detail. It was a rash and unorganized rising, which the wiser and cooler heads of the country feared, and wished to prevent, and they had hitherto prevailed; but they were well

aware, that the first success of Wallace, after his last victory, would set a torch to the combustible material, which would blaze from one end to the other of the country.

In the family of Simon of Hilton, the events of the period succeeding the fight at Allanton to the mission of the Baron to Wallace, produced little impression, with exception of the report which reached this peaceful dwelling, that Cormack had proved traitor, and was seen sometimes in the near neighbourhood of Southron fortresses, walking as if perfectly at home. Simon, on hearing this rumour, broke out into strong invectives against Cormack, and even against the day when he had brought such a wretch to his house; and his daughter, at first, seemed to be overpowered by grief and shame; but after being much distressed, she all at once became thoughtful and calm, and, to her father's great surprise, declared that she did not believe one word of the intelligence. Simon had no doubt of the fact, and was sure that she was consoling herself with a delusion; but when she continued of the same opinion

for several days, and when he saw, in fact, that, contrary to his wishes and his hopes, she still cherished a fond regard for this objectionable person, he broke out into rage, which she bore with respectful calmness, contrary to her usual system of retort and repartee, and finally ended in forbidding her to think of Cormack as any thing but a most vile slave, who had shewn more dishonesty and ingratitude than any man had ever exhibited before.

He had assured her previously, that to think of him in any other light than that of one beneath her, was entirely out of the question; but this last harsh vituperation drove her from him in tears, which affected the old man more than he cared to acknowledge to any one. It was thus matters stood with them: the conversation, when it turned on Cormack, always having the same termination, but somewhat modified in regard to severe language, until the return of Sir Ranald from Ayr, after his expedition to the outlaw camp. The old baron, after a day's repose at home, bethought him of his favourite yeoman, to whom he was led

by similarity of years, and the recollection of scenes in which they had both been partakers, and which few remained to talk of besides themselves. He did not hesitate to gratify Simon's curiosity in regard to what he had seen, for the cares of state troubled not the honest yeoman; and then he began to question him about his daughter;—"Is the maiden well?"

"I give you thanks, my Lord, in good health."

"Hath she got over grieving about her gallant?"

Simon shook his head. "I cannot drive him out of her head; and, now that he is infamous, it doth seem to me she affecteth him more than ever."

"Mayhap she doth not credit the tale."

"Just so, my Lord, she doth treat the tale with scorn and contempt, and taketh upon her to say that she would not do him so much wrong as to believe it."

"I fear it is too true, from what I heard among William Wallace's people. They believe him to be false."

Simon sighed deeply, "I will never trust a slave born again; I thought him a world's wonder."

"Then do not think harshly of thy child, friend Simon, for entertaining good thoughts of him when he was deserving. Now, I confess it doth seem to me a hallucination, that wholesome air and exercise should drive away from her."

"It cometh all," said Simon, "of these silly romaunts that minstrels ever sing, now a-days; and which simple maids drink in as if they were the breath of life. Marry, they all believe their lovers sinless and infallible, the poor doting things, as the hero of the minstrel tale!"

"That may be with some, Simon, but others—and I think thy daughter one—know that a minstrel story is all fable, at least generally."

"Not always either, my Lord, for when they take up a good feat of arms and make a song of it, the main part is truth, though the gilding be false. I know something of the craft, though I ne'er could turn a tune."

"Rather against thy proficiency in the art, friend Simon, it must be allowed; but thou art a dealer in prose, not in song, and if men say true, thou hast already spun a goodly tale out of Allan-

ton. Beware! if thy telling faculty is known to Southron ears, and thy theme is of that fight, thou art but a lost man to me."

"Nay! my good Lord, I have never, save to our own menzie at the castle, tried to speak of that glorious day, and surely among them I may venture—"

"I know thou art generally discreet. I merely sought to remind thee, that thou canst not be too guarded now in every thing thou dost do and say."

"You have ever said so, my Lord, and I have always attended to what you say, as dutiful vassal should. I should like once more to match me with a Southland spear, just to see if my arm hath lost much of its strength."

Simon said this as if it was merely a casual remark, and he thought he was knowing; but his lord saw through the manœuvre at once. "Hold thy tongue, Simon; be quiet. Canst thou not mind thy steers? What hast thou to do with Southrons and spears, crack-pated as thou art?"

"Surely, my Lord, for one who hath lived all his days in feuds and fights, scarcely a year without a skrimmage at the least, the wish is somewhat natural?"

"The better reason now why thou shouldst rather follow Sir Priest than Sir Knight. Thou shouldst be careful not to miss thy regular hour at the confessional, friend Simon, so that thy way be clear, and thy footing sure in the long journey we must all take."

"And that is sound doctrine," replied Simon "which I cannot deny. Doubtless, in time of tumult and war we are like enemies of God as well as man; for we are guilty of deeds that, in peaceful days, would freeze our blood; and the more reason have we for repentance as we draw near our end."

Their conversation, to Simon's surprise, continued in this strain for a short time longer; and he remarked, on Sir Ranald's departure, that he never before had heard him talk so like his own chaplain.

CHAPTER IX.

"He knew himself a villain, but he knew
That those who hated feared him too."
The Corsair.

WALLACE, on parting with his uncle, proceeded immediately to impress on his friends the conviction he felt that the Lord Piercy would never agree to the condition they had proposed, and that it was therefore necessary to take steps without delay, to draw together as many of those who were friendly to the patriotic cause as could be assembled within a few days. His reasons were so forcible, that in a short time they were all brought over to his way of thinking; and trusty emissaries were got ready to rouse the Ayrshire and Galloway men, who could most readily elude the vigilance of the Lord Governor, by keeping to the range of hills, along which Angus penetrated into Lanarkshire. It was no easy task to escape the notice of the

Southron spies; but Wallace's adherents knew them by a sort of instinct, when men, less acute, never dreamt they were other than the simple countrymen they appeared to be; and so daring and so fond of that dangerous variety of amusement were they, that they would enter into a bantering conversation at the most critical period, which they managed so cleverly as to excite no suspicion, or even to avert it, when it had begun to arise before. His own example tended much to make this their favourite employment, for his youth and activity, together with the indomitable courage that so distinguished him, all combined to make the most hazardous enterprises the most agreeable to Wallace; and his chiefs were under the necessity frequently of representing to him that such conduct was unbecoming his high position and great fame, for, young though he was, he was still the head of his party; but he bore their chidings with great good humour, and generally let them pass with a joke.

Amidst the cares incidental to his place, at this juncture, he had now the minor annoyance to con-

tend with, of the wild rage which had possessed the men of Cumnock, since the taking of their chief. Kersland had been unable to still the uproar, and he had been several times among them for that purpose, with little success, for they insisted on being led immediately against Heselrig and his Castle, whatever the peril might be. He had, however, prevailed on those who were leaders under Angus to withdraw them from the place they occupied, to a position north of his own, where he could have them more under his immediate control. Being chiefly of the Celtic portion of the population, this division of his army was less disciplined than that under his own command.

Their Chief, with his passion for every thing that belonged to the olden time, had delighted in training them rather to a desultory mode of warfare than close and continued fighting; and they were better used to the short bow, so inferior to that of England, than the truly Scottish six ell spear, which Wallace had seen at once was the weapon on which he must rely; and the schiltron, the form of array in which alone he could main-

tain himself against the heavy horses, steel-clad, like their riders, of the Southron men-at-arms. In his cooler moments, Angus was fully aware of this also; but his excitability, since he came into the scene of danger and of action, and near the enemy, always marred the conclusions of his better judgment.

Two days had now elapsed since his capture, and the confinement seemed to have subdued his spirit and his bodily strength so much, that Galbraith pronounced him to be composed and rational. Heselrig, who delighted in viewing the misery of any whom he hated, and the number was considerable, seeing that it included all those who had at any time crossed or baffled him, for he never forgot nor forgave such event, believed that he might now enjoy the satisfaction of conversing with him on the subject of his own prospects and those of his niece. Some time, therefore, after the Leech had made this pleasing announcement, he desired Folkam to have him brought up, under a guard of spearmen, as Galbraith declared it might be done with safety.

" If he doth warrant it, doubtless it must be right," said Folkham; " for if ever mortal man knew the mysteries of art, it is that Leech."

" He is skilful," replied Heselrig.

" By St Mary, and not without reason! He hath been for two nights without rest, watching certain herbs on the ramparts, which are doubtless designed for some human ailments; and the pains he doth take to breathe over them the proper spell at the right moment, in my poor mind, doth shew he is in communication with other guess sort of personages than the old physicians who send down their knowledge in books."

" Doth he remain out all night? "

" From midnight to morning; and he is ever muttering some charm, and waving his arms in the air, in a fearful manner; the warders, along the walls, gaze on him with silent dread, and truly their watch doth seem to be only of him."

Folkham looked pale, and even ghastly, as he gave this account, which his lord listened to with comparative indifference, merely, as it was finished, repeating his order about Angus.

When the Chief of Cumnock entered the apartment, it appeared that half his almost gigantic frame had disappeared; so much did his sunken spirit affect the form. His air was tranquil, and his looks composed, as he stepped quietly before the spot where the latter was seated, and stood erect in his presence.

"I have sent for thee," said Heselrig, to know if thou had aught to say why the doom of a traitor should not be awarded thee."

"To whom sayest thou I am traitor?" enquired Angus.

"To thy King, Edward of England and Scotland."

"I know no such King; but I will answer thee, true subject am I to the only sovereign of my country, John of Scotland."

"Who is the subject of England's crown," retorted Heselrig.

"No more than thy liege is vassal to him."

"Thou art a bold and a pertinacious traitor. Thy pitiful country hath, since ancient times, been but a fief of her greater neighbour—that thou hast read enough to know."

"I have, as thou sayest, read much, and I have found, that while thy country was conquered, first by Saxons and next by Normans, my own freedom-loving land hath never yet bowed her neck to a conqueror, till this instant of time, when Edward thy King, by guile and treachery, hath possessed himself of greater part of it. How then could the King of this free country be the vassal of thy sovereign?"

"I sent not for thee to argue a point like this. Art thou prepared to die?"

"Better than thou, Arthur of Heselrig," replied Angus, still with the most perfect composure. "Yet few men are prepared, as they should be, for that great change. But if thou dost ask whether I am willing to quit this world, I tell thee that my life is but worthless indeed, when it is at the disposal of such as thou, and I set no value on it."

"Thou art a bold and a reckless rebel, Angus of Cumnock. Yet thou hast a tie to this world, that methinks should induce thee to love it—thy niece!"

The mention of this word seemed to discompose

Angus extremely. He started, and the blood rushed to his brow; but he raised his hand to the latter for a moment, and when he removed it, the flush had gone. The change, however, was sufficient to draw the guard closer around him while he replied—"I have a niece, for whom I would die many deaths. She is in thy power also, and what her lot may be, as well as mine, it is impossible to foretel. But this I will say unto thee, thou canst not even imagine the firmness of soul, under grievous suffering, which purity and goodness do bestow; and thou shalt find in that youthful maiden, courage to which the boisterous bravery of thee and thy associates is little better than disguised cowardice."

The attendants beheld their prisoner and their Knight with surprise, that the former should dare, and the latter bear so much; for Heselrig was feared more than he was loved by those under him. But the latter had an object to attain, and he could ever then put some restraint on his passions. He had still hopes that the feelings of Marion might be wrought on through fear for her uncle.

Heselrig told the yeomen to stand farther off, so that no part of the conversation might be heard by them, and then spoke in a more bland tone.

"If I speak harshly, it is because thou dost compel me to do so, for thou hast ever set thyself against me in word and deed; but God doth know I would willingly serve thee if thou wouldst but lay aside thy bearing of defiance."

"What hast thou now to propose? Speak at once. I know thou art about to mention something," asked Angus, still composedly.

"Then, noble Angus, let me state, it is known to me, as well as to the Lord Governor, that although thou didst appear on the hills in a questionable form, and didst refuse to answer the summons to appear before him at Ayr, thou hast never, until lately, done aught, save in thine own defence, that amounted to overt acts of treason; therefore, if thou wilt make certain promises, I shall take on myself to grant thee life, until the pleasure of the King or his lieutenant is known."

"The promises, Sir Sheriff?" enquired Angus again, with the same stillness of manner.

"It is known to thee," said Heselrig, with hesitation, "that I have been for some time deeply enamoured of thy lovely niece. In one word, then, induce her to listen to my suit, and thou art free."

Angus, at these words, fixed his eyes on Heselrig with a stern regard, in which anger and surprise struggled for the mastery, and a short space elapsed ere he spoke, which he did apparently with an effort, in the quiet manner he hitherto succeeded in maintaining.

"Dost thou make this proposal to me with her consent?" he asked, while he looked eagerly and anxiously on Heselrig.

"Assuredly," replied the latter, without hesitation, while Angus again raised his hand to his forehead, and remained silent.

"Impossible!" he burst out. "Yet," continued he, "what can I know? The lack of our greenwood hath made me tame—it may also have made her another creature. Alas! alas! that I should think so! Sir Knight, in answer to thy proposal, I must demand a conference with my niece—thou canst not believe that I would decide on such mat-

ters without observing and conferring with one who is so deeply interested."

Heselrig paused. He desired to obtain the promise before granting the interview, which he knew he would be obliged to permit, but Angus seemed to read his thoughts.

"On no other condition shall I undertake the task. And I do not pledge myself, until I perceive how the lady doth incline, to take the course proposed."

"I did not hesitate, noble Angus, because I objected to the interview, for how couldst thou state my case to the lady without seeing her? but because I wished to have a longer and more full conference with thee, that thou mightest know the danger on one side distinctly, and the advantage on the other."

"Thou mayest state thy thoughts to thine own satisfaction," said Angus, while something like a scornful smile appeared on his lip.

Heselrig now recovered from the heat into which the bearing of his prisoner had thrown him, assumed all that bland courtesy of manner with

which he was wont to gain over the Lord Piercy, and entered into a glowing description of his brilliant prospects as the favourite of the Lord Governor; and then with a mournful and seemingly reluctant transition, he detailed, with skill and tact, the inevitable ruin of her fortunes, the forfeiture of her lands, the downfall of her house and kindred in all its branches, and the certain doom of her uncle, and the latter (he said) would affect her more than all the rest.

Angus listened to his lengthened discourse, delivered with much earnestness, with a look that never changed, in which Heselrig could read nothing. It seemed that his imprisonment had already wrought a great transformation in his moral nature. Wanting the excitement of external objects, his mind sank into a less elevated, though more healthful mood, and was able to grasp all the circumstances connected with his position, and to understand perfectly the danger in which he and his niece stood. He perceived also, that the only chance they had of being saved—for he was well acquainted with Heselrig's character—was

in temporizing, till Wallace, by another successful battle, might set them free.

"I will give thee no answer," said he, "until I hold converse with the hapless object of thy strange affection, if such it be, which doth seek its end by persecution; and hide it as thou wilt, this must be the fact."

"Thou dost speak bluntly," said Heselrig, his brow lowering a little in spite of himself, "but not less bluntly than wrongfully. The Lord Governor would preserve this lady as a faithful subject to her King, so he willeth not that she shall fall into the hands of those who raise their arms against him. And he doth believe this may be best done by bestowing her on a true subject."

"Knights and nobles," said Angus, "who profess strict adherence to the rules of chivalry, should respect the feelings and inclinations of one who is noble."

"Thou sayest truly," answered Heselrig readily. "If she was not an infant, as under age, such would be unquestionably the commands of the noble Piercy; but as under his guidance, and

being in law his child, he is bound to consult her interests rather than her wishes, which may be immature and ill-considered in one so young."

"But if her wishes point towards Sir Arthur of Heselrig, they are to be esteemed valid and held conclusive!"

"It hath pleased my noble Lord to fix upon me as one suited to make the damsel happy; seeing that I am devoted to her, and in consideration of my humble merits, such as they are."

"Humph! The sooner I discover what her wishes are under the circumstances, the sooner shall we understand each other," replied Angus.

"That shall be immediately," said Heselrig, not sorry to close the conference; for he felt his choler rising at the indifference with which both his power and his courteous speeches were treated, and he ordered an attendant to intimate to the Lady Marion's woman the visit which would be forthwith made to her.

Marion had been expecting that her uncle would be permitted to see her, and was therefore not altogether unprepared; yet the sight of him in her

weak state, and under circumstances so different from the position he occupied in the happy times when they met freely and joyously in the forest glade, affected her extremely; and he, the apparently iron-nerved foe, in the presence of Heselrig, was touched even to tears. It was sometime ere they were both sufficiently composed, and after many questions regarding the condition of each other, to enter on the business for which alone Angus had been permitted to see her, the object dearest to him on earth.

"This tyrant," said he mournfully,—"this Heselrig, darling of my soul, hath dared to lift his unhallowed gaze to thee."

"He hath, my father; and he hath almost driven me distracted," replied she, looking down.

"Thou wert not wont to be so timid, my child; but, doubtless, the want of pure and free air can weaken the spirit as well as the body."

"I fear him not for myself—no, not for a single moment have I done so; but for thee I tremble."

Angus regarded her for a moment with eyes in which strong affection and surprise were mingled.

"And is it loss of my life thou dost tremble for?—the life of poor Angus M'Rie! that hath been for many years as a stray which any Southron, strong and bold enough, might seize!—a poor blighted outcast, who, saving thyself and one whose fortunes are somewhat like his own, hath nothing in this wide world that he can care for!"

"O say not so, mine uncle! a thousand hearts will bleed at thy captivity—a thousand blades leap from the scabbard to rescue thee were it possible!"

"Yes," said he sadly, "I did injustice to my followers; but they will forget me, and find another Chief in due season."

"What shall we do? He will not give us much time. I had three days to make up my mind, two of them have already run, and to-morrow is the last."

"He did insinuate that thou didst desire to see me, that I might counsel thee to accept his suit." An involuntary expression of disgust flitted across her countenance, which rejoiced Angus exceedingly. "I knew he spoke not the truth," said he; "but

knowing thy love for me, I feared that thy woman's nature might have shewn some appearance of yielding to a fate so shocking to save me. And mark me, child! had I found that thou didst this —that thou didst even give him the slightest reason to believe that thou would take him for thy husband—to save the life of thine uncle, that uncle would have held his life so redeemed as worthless, and fit only to be terminated as speedily as possible in the depths of Cora Linn." As he spoke thus, Angus regarded her with a doubtful and mournful aspect.

"Hear me, my father, for so thou art," exclaimed she, falling on his neck; "I would die to save thee, but I could not wed infamy and dishonour."

"Thou art mine own darling still! Why did I doubt thee for a moment?" cried Angus, clasping her warmly in his embrace.

"Listen!" said she, hastily, "for we shall soon be interrupted. We have found means to make known to the gallant young Southron, Ridley, that thou art in the hold of thine enemy. I did ask

three days' respite in order to gain time for this youth, who is good and grateful, to interest himself for thee, and yet I am not without hope."

"Thou art ever the same, still for others rather than thyself, but do not hope too much from Southron gratitude," said Angus, who, though unwilling to dash her hopes, inwardly believed that no power on earth would save him from the resentment and revenge of Hesclrig.

"Say not so, mine uncle, they are not all bad as thou dost sometimes believe, and all men say that Ridley is truly noble."

"Thou must insist on having the full time, since thou hast such confidence, ere thou dost give thy final answer to him."

"And so be assured I shall; even this day it is possible, if Ridley doth succeed, that we may hear from him; yet it is doubtful, the times being so unsettled."

"And the Governor so occupied. Trust me, he hath enough on his hands to keep such trifles as outlaws' lives from his thoughts. But cheer thee! and, faithful Dora, thou hast my blessing, child, for thy love and kindness to her."

Dora kissed the hand he extended to her.

"Thine only friend and counsellor in this den, I believe! for whom canst thou trust?"

"No one, uncle, though the physician doth sometimes seem to counsel kindly, I trust him not, for he is the bosom friend of Heselrig."

"I have heard of that man; strange tales are abroad regarding him; if they be true, my child, the serpent that deceived Eve could hardly be worse; so be thou ever guarded and cautious."

Here a knock at the door interrupted them, and Angus's guard intimated that the time had expired, and he must return to the apartment where the Sheriff awaited him. A short and hurried embrace followed, and the door closed again on the female captives.

Heselrig received the account which Angus gave him of the interview, with a gloomy brow, for, since they had parted, his distrustful temper had suggested that it was likely his emissary would play him false, even at the risk of his life; he could believe that such men as Angus existed, and he accounted them the fools of creation, only fit to

be preyed on by spirits like himself. He remarked, too, the satisfied air of his prisoner.

"Thou hast acted the part of a faithful messenger in this case?" enquired he.

"Surely, my message was to discover the secret thoughts of this damsel; and it would seem, as she is only to declare them after the third day has expired, that she doth desire to think more on the matter."

"That was certainly our arrangement, but thou knowest well that more is expected than plain words imply sometimes in an envoy."

"Thou hadst no promise nor hope from me that I would aid thee! Thou canst not say so," said Angus composedly.

"Well! enough for the present, since better may not be," replied Heselrig, resuming the gruff bearing he had manifested when Angus was first brought to him that day, and at the same time giving a signal to the guard, who immediately closed round their prisoner, and hurried him off. It was a proof of the change in Angus's mood that he bore the imperious and harsh treatment of his captor without any sign of impatience.

Since he was taken, the burgh of Lanark had been visited by an unusual number of strangers, who were known to some at least of the inhabitants as followers of Angus; and Heselrig's vigilance, since the rencounter of Galbraith with the men of Wallace, having been increased, the result was the seizure of one who was suspected of being an outlaw, and also of the burgher (who was held among the Scots to be favourable to the Southrons generally) in whose house he was found. They were both consigned, with little ceremony, to the dungeons of the Castle, until the Sheriff should have leisure or inclination to examine them. In the temper he was in then, it was not likely that this would be long deferred; for he was burning with suppressed rage against Wallace and Angus too. His military fame, which before had been paramount among the youth of the West, now quailed before that of the former; he had therefore clipped the wings of his ambition, as well as crossed his love, and the latter had assisted in doing both; while, since he was a captive, he had maintained a proud air of superiority, even in his

presence, which was particularly galling to one who was both haughty and vain. He felt relieved, therefore, when, as he could not immediately proceed against Angus, other victims were offered to propitiate his anger, and glut his revenge.

Calling Folkham before him, he demanded whether they were disposed to confess; and on his replying in the negative, he declared his intention of applying the question on the following morning. "What say the knaves?"

"But little," answered the 'Squire; "the tanner is sore afraid, and a chance there may be of getting something from him; but the other rogue looks as bold an outlaw as ever stepped the greenwood."

"Hath the tanner been known to harbour such persons?"

"He is one of the best of them; but for that matter indeed, in my poor mind, all the townsfolks should be in the woods, as well as Wallace and his gang; not a whit are they better than he; though the vermin be wily and careful, the truth is but too clear."

"Thou knowest the Lord Governor had information to that purport, from his own espials, as well as from us; natheless, no case hath been got before with grounds sufficient to found upon."

"This outlaw is notourly one of Red Angus's men, and I rede that the Chief and his follower be confronted in the question room; your Lordship doth bear in mind what hath ever been the practice here, that all suspected persons in close ward, shall be present when one of their number is put to the torture for the crimes alleged against them."

"It is true, and it is shrewdly devised also. Then, if it doth appear that Angus, and he who is supposed to be his man, recognise each other, both prisoners are guilty—ha?"

"Just so," replied Folkham, "and better proof cannot be had, as they were seen, the two knaves, in close talk, for minutes together, within burgh, at the tanner's dwelling."

"Better reason have we never had, at least, for enforcing the question. So let all be prepared; and have care taken that no person breathe a word concerning the affair to the parties."

The man believed to belong to Angus's band, was in reality his old and trusty adherent Allan, who had been so severely hurt in defending his young lady, and who had been since a trusted and influential leader among the Cumnock men.

The question room was a sort of hall, in the lower part of the Castle, having passages that led to the various dungeons, by which the prisoners were brought to the spot. Here Heselrig, at an early on the following morning, seated himself, attended by a strong guard, with Folkham also, and Galbraith, who was directed to attend with such needful restoratives as might keep up the culprits, till the more severely rending portion of the ordeal should be gone through. The rack was in readiness, and the executioners beside it. Of the prisoners, Angus first appeared, and an expression of scorn mingled with disgust dwelt on his countenance, as he cast his eyes on the fearful apparatus.

"It is the custom of this Castle," said Heselrig, in reply to a look which Angus threw on him, "that when a person is put to the question here, all those within the walls, accused of the same crime, shall be present; it is thus thou art brought here."

"So!" replied Angus quietly, but it was observed that his eyes glanced more keenly than on the day before.

All eyes were directed to him, as the other captives entered from the opposite side, and a startling change immediately took place on his countenance. But as if recollecting himself, he suddenly withdrew his gaze, and averted his face from the person of his follower. Not so the latter, who, either overcome altogether by emotion, or less skilled in the wiles of the world, ran up to his Chief, and seizing his hand, wrang it, while he exclaimed, "And is it thus we meet, and in a place like this? Alas! and woe is me!"

Angus gazed piteously on him, and pressed his hand, but remained silent. Meanwhile, looks were exchanged between the Knight and his 'Squire.

"It is enough," said the former; "stand aside, Chief of Cumnock, and let justice take its course."

As if wondering what was next to be done, Angus moved a little apart, while one of the executioner's assistants seized the third prisoner, who was the burgher of Lanark, supposed to be

rather friendly to the Southrons, or at least more so than his townsmen in general; he was in an agony of fear, his limbs shook, and every drop of blood seemed to be banished from his face.

"Bring him forward," cried Heselrig again, in a stern tone, "and let him answer me fully and distinctly. What knowest thou of this man?"

"As I shall answer to God and the saints," faultered out the burgher, who was a feeble man, as well as half dead already with fright, "nothing, save that he came to my booth to purchase hides yesterday, and once before."

"Knave! thou dost lie most impudently!"

"Not so, my Lord, as I hope for salvation," said the man, dropping on his knees as if unable to support himself longer.

A dead silence prevailed in the Hall; even the most hardened of Heselrig's followers felt a load of awe on him as he looked on the wretched figure before them, begging for mercy, yet evidently hopeless of any; but the Sheriff had no such feeling.

"Wilt thou yet confess that thou hast held

dealings with an intercomuned traitor, knowing him to be such?" cried he, raising his voice.

The poor wretch could only articulate the word "Mercy!" in a voice scarcely above a whisper, when he sank on the floor. All eyes were so intently fixed on him, that the change which the scene was gradually working on Angus passed unobserved. The features of the latter seemed to swell, and his whole body to dilate by the excitement which animated him; but he spoke not a word. At a sign the executioners seized their victim, now almost insensible from terror, and placed him on the instrument of torture. The process soon began, and a yell burst from the hapless burgher, that rang through the vaulted dungeons around, and startled every unfortunate left in them, like the echo of his own doom.

Angus crossed his arms and pressed them down tightly as if combating some inward movement, while his eyes almost started from their sockets. The devilish work went on, and another yell, more faint, but more indicative of agony than the former, was sent forth by the sufferer, while his

head drooped, and his eyes seemed to fix in his head.

Galbraith put his hand to his pulse and said, "He is feeble, my Lord, scarcely fit for the next—"

"Pooh!" replied the Sheriff, as, with perfect composure, he made a sign to the executioner to proceed. But the process was interrupted in an unexpected manner. Angus was wrought up into one of his moods, and at this point sprang upon Heselrig, as he rose from his chair to observe more closely the effect of the next stage in the torments,—"Monster! thou art most meet for thine own hellish instruments!" he cried, as he griped Heselrig by the throat, and bore him backwards with great force to the ground. An uproar immediately ensued, and every spear was levelled at Angus's body. In an instant more he had been pierced with at least a dozen, had not the Leech, with a look of fury and in a stern voice called out, "Hold!" They paused and stared in surprise at the prohibition. "Would ye rob the hangman?

Would ye slay him thus? Then you do what the villain outlaw doth desire!"

"True, true!" cried Folkham, who had assisted in withdrawing Angus's fingers from his lord's throat. "Keep back, but guard him sure. The rack and the gibbet are meeter for the robber than such a death."

Meanwhile Heselrig, amidst the tumult, lay stunned where he fell, and Galbraith was obliged to use the restoratives on him which had been prepared for his victims, ere he recovered self-possession. On looking round, the first object he beheld was Angus in the hands of half-a-dozen men, who had difficulty in holding him.

"Why doth he yet live?" enquired he in a voice hoarse with rage. "Slay him where he stands."

Galbraith, however, made a significant motion, unseen by him, indicating that he was not yet in his senses, and the spearmen restrained their hands.

The Leech then addressed himself to his lord, and Folkham said afterwards he was sure he spoke

of something diabolical, for he never saw more fiendish expression in human face. Heselrig was raised to his feet; and, looking round, first on what seemed the dead body of the unfortunate burgher, he ordered it to be cast forth, then bending his lowering brow on Angus, he continued, —"Another day, and a more suitable instrument shall requite these rebellious thieves. Meanwhile double-iron this red savage, who hath been treated with too much lenity."

His orders were obeyed, for by this time the excitement had partly gone off, and Angus was aware of the folly of resistance. His poor follower, while this scene was acting, had thrust himself between the yeomen and his master, so stoutly that one of them felled him to the ground with the butt of his staff, ere he could make him quiet. Heselrig, slowly and in wrath, ascended to the hall of the Castle, meditating on the signal retaliation he would inflict on the daring Angus, who had so humbled him in the very pride of his power, and as he triumphed over and wantoned in human suffering.

He found there a post from the Lord Governor. He seized the letter impatiently, and read through many instructions, until he came to the part concerning Angus, at which he actually gnashed his teeth.

"What meddler hath dared to inform him of my prisoner?" cried he, glaring round among his attendants.

"None here, my Lord, I am sure; but, doubtless, the bruit would spread fast to Ayrshire, and so it hath reached him."

"Avoid! Give place! all but Galbraith and Folkham."

The hall was cleared of all saving those two confidential advisers, while Heselrig paced its length in order to gain some degree of composure, and, after a few turns, stopped, saying,—"The Lord Governor doth forbid any proceeding against Angus MacRie, until he shall see and converse with that unhappy man. Such are the words of this letter; judge ye now, friends, whether I have not reason to be half mad with vexation. Yet surely I must not hold myself bound by

his commands, seeing that his Lordship knoweth not of the attempt on me which the caitiff made even now."

Folkham, who entertained a considerable dread of the Governor, shook his head at this insinuation, and remarked that the Lord Piercy would not be gainsaid, and it would be better to take him with them in what they did; while Galbraith, with a sullen brow, declared that the villain ought not to see the light of another sun, and he should be torn limb from limb by the rack ere he was hoisted on the gibbet.

"It was for that I saved him from the yeomen."

"I thought thee right, Galbraith; but it is unlucky now. Better it had been if the spears had riddled his felon carcass, than that a chance should be of his escape. But where has this loitering post tarried? This letter should have been here yester morn?"

Folkham brought in the man to explain why he had delayed.

"So please you," answered he, "I was scarcely past Strathaven when I observed some men to fol-

low me suspiciously. I went first on one side, then on the other, and they still held me in chase. They were outlaws, I know, from their garb of green ; so, fearing the loss of this important paper, I struck across by Douglas, and thus escaped them."

The explanation seemed satisfactory, and Heselrig proceeded to question him farther.

"Heard'st thou aught, in thy circuit, of moving men, or any event that was toward ? "

"Much was said, my Lord," replied he, "about men passing; but whether they were Scots or Southrons, I could not learn. They went in the direction of Glasgow."

"Doubtless, part of the English reinforcement. Was aught said about the henchman of Wallace ; had he been in those parts ? "

"My time was but scant for inquiry," said the man ; but, in coming along, I travelled with one, a yeoman of the place, who spoke much of this Cormack, and as if he had seen him lately. I doubt not the rogue is busy in stirring up the people, for he is one of the chief agents of Wallace."

" This doth accord with my Lord's tidings, which bear that the henchman hath been seen, in various parts, distant from each other, keeping up the communications of the rebel Chief. Of this my Lord says he hath true intelligence. Strange that we cannot light on the knave! Thou art the last who saw him, Galbraith, if it really was he with whom thou hadst the tuilzie at Lanark. A high reward is offered, but we must double it. So! thou mayest go. Thus far I can think, but no farther, on these matters. By Heaven! this red robber hath unhinged me quite. He shall die, if even the Lord Piercy take my place for it the hour after. I am resolved; for I have thought it over, and the affront he hath put on me can only be atoned by his death; therefore, at sun-rise to-morrow, he dies! Nay! speak not," for he knew Folkham was about to remonstrate, " it is in vain!"

Angus, from the time he entered the Castle, believed that his life would soon terminate, and received the intimation that he was to prepare for leaving the world by next morning, with indifference.

"I have only two requests to make," said he, "in regard to this affair. Let not the Lady Marion know of it till it be over, and give me a priest for a few minutes, if such a being can live in the air of this place."

He was promised compliance with both of his requests, and left alone to think on the prospect before him, and begin his preparation for the last great change, which now appeared to be inevitable.

In the tumult of his thoughts, Heselrig had forgotten the total overthrow which his present proceeding must cause of the hopes he had lately conceived, of gaining the consent of Marion by means of her uncle. In fact, he saw before that the resolute bearing of the latter, and his fixed principle, were both against him, and he had felt that he must place but little reliance on him. He had, therefore, before the scene occurred in the question-room, begun to think frequently of Galbraith's powerful medicine, which, in conformity with the strictest rules of preparation, would be ready for exhibition that day.

Amidst the warlike anticipation which occupied entirely the mind of Piercy, and kept the Southrons under him in a state of excitement, though they were ignorant of the cause, Heselrig continued only to prosecute more zealously his own selfish objects. It is true he was not fully informed of the Governor's plans, but he knew that a great attempt was to be made to subdue the rising, and to prevent such outbreaks in future; and a young knight, with less consideration for private objects, would be on fire to distinguish himself by exertions of every sort, especially in checking the outlaws in the neighbourhood, and gaining intelligence of their movements.

In this he had not been successful; but as his own bold and unhesitating spies had been cowed and baffled by Wallace, Piercy did not blame him for failing in that respect; yet he was not entirely pleased with him, for there was a sort of slackness and indifference about his movements which he had not observed at other times, and which he did not fail to ascribe to the fair lady who abode with him. But the progress he intended to make be-

fore striking the fatal blow on his enemy, would set all to rights; and he busied himself accordingly in making those arrangements which would enable him, on a certain day, to bring down on the luckless outlaws a force that would leave no chance of escape to them.

CHAPTER X.

> This is thy doom! * * *
> Although mine enemy thou still hast been
> High sparks of honour in thee I've seen.
>
> *Richard II.*

On the morning of the day whose occurrences are now to be detailed, the Lord Governor agreed with his confidents, that two days afterwards he should intimate to Wallace, that the truce would not be granted.

It was generally understood among the outlaws that Cormack was engaged in negotiating between their Chief and those parties whom the latter was anxious to draw round him with as little delay as possible. And that the business was of the most secret nature there could be no doubt, for Cormack never appeared among them except at night, and Wallace communicated what passed between them

to no one. Sometimes he seemed much exhausted as if he had travelled far, and the various disguises he appeared in, were also cause of wonder. But, on the whole, their life in general being one of surprises and novelties, none, even of the principal leaders thought of shewing any desire to be acquainted with Cormack's occupation.

After receiving the first communication from Lord Piercy, in reply to his proposal, which he expected, and which we have already alluded to, Wallace set about his preparations with an energy that shewed he had no doubt of the line of policy contemplated by his crafty antagonist, and a course of tactics had therefore been established between them, the success of which depended on the superior skill of one, which was to be proved by the event. Wallace, always under great anxiety about what was passing in the Castle of Lanark, had contrived, in a manner which his leaders did not clearly comprehend, but it was evidently through the burgh, to acquire correct information on this head. The fate of Marion was to be decided very soon, and what was to be done he did not imagine,

after she had given her decided negative to Heselrig, for, of course, it was not possible almost that he could be aware of the frightful conspiracies concerning her between Heselrig and the Leech. He knew she would decide against Heselrig, and he feared the latter would do something atrocious then, and he could not help it, there being no possibility of relieving her before the expiry of the time. Still, it was evident to those around him that his mind was more tranquil than it had been after her capture for some time.

He had learned that the fate of Angus was decided ; and on the evening of that day, which was to be the last of the latter, he called his leaders together, to sit in council on an affair of consequence.

" You all know (he began) the worth of Angus, and how much he hath merited of us and of Scotland ; it would ill become us then to let any opportunity escape of rescuing him from the fangs of the tyrant who is about to slay him ; judge ye if the present be not one that is possible. The place where the unfortunates condemned in that Castle

are put to death, is, as you all know, outside of the walls, and some little distance from them. It is not probable that horsemen will be sent out to guard their prisoner. Could we not, then, plant some two dozen, mounted on our best horses, in the wood nearest to the gallows-tree, and, by a sudden rush, rescue and carry off our hapless Angus? What think ye, friends; is this possible?"

"It is possible," said Stephen of Ireland; "but barely so."

"And extremely hazardous," said Kerlie.

"Yet it is our only chance," said Auchinleck.

"It is so," added Wallace. "And should we leave any chance untried?"

"I think not," replied Stephen; and they all assented. In fact, nothing could be more in accordance with their tastes and desires; and the most dangerous schemes, if once suggested, were almost sure of being adopted,—although, from narrow escapes they had lately made, they were more anxious to deliberate and weigh the matter, in all its bearings, ere they proceeded to carry it into effect.

It was arranged, therefore, that Wallace should head their enterprise in person—for he would so have it—and one of the other Chiefs, to be chosen by lot, which fell upon Kerlie. The swiftest steeds were chosen, from the small number in their possession, and every needful preparation made for the next morning. The gallows-tree stood on a knoll between the Castle and the burgh; and probably it was selected to give the inhabitants of the latter the full benefit of the exhibition and the example, when an execution was to take place.

Wallace took up his position in the wood, soon after the first streaks of the approaching day began to appear, and while the Castle was yet sunk in absolute repose, excepting the warders, who paced their weary rounds. He and his followers were clothed in long coarse tunics, such as countrymen wore in those days; and each had underneath this a shirt of mail, while he carried in his hand a spear, and by his side, beneath his outer garment, a trusty sword. His object was to give his band the appearance of a troop of countrymen riding together, and armed for defence on the road, and

attracted by curiosity to see the execution, which had been much talked of; and he hoped to approach near enough, without exciting suspicion, to be within a few yards of the gallows-tree, when the victim was brought out; at the same time, he thought it prudent to keep close under covert till the hour was at hand. The light gradually became brighter, and objects were perceptible at a greater distance; then a hum began, and slowly increased, from the side where the town was situated; after which the trumpets of the Castle sounded a reveillie, and all was stirring in that quarter. Presently a group issued from the gate, bearing something which they could guess to be the simple apparatus necessary to the occasion, —a rope, to be thrown over a convenient limb of the tree, having a noose at one end, to go round the prisoner's neck, while the other was long enough to permit a sufficient number of hands to grasp it, for the purpose of hoisting the sufferer up to the requisite elevation.

Objects were rapidly becoming more distinct, and Wallace was on the point of leading off his

band, to get round unobserved to the road by which the Castle was approached from Lanark, in order to come to the scene of action by a less equivocal avenue, when, on looking in that direction, he observed a horseman making for the Castle at speed, who, as he reached the gate, rang out a loud blast from his horn, which soon opened the latter.

"What can this mean?" said Wallace to Kersland. "Belike a courier, to announce the arrival of some one."

"It must be so," replied Kersland, in the same cautious whisper; "for see! he doth not enter. Best keep off, though; it may be tidings of another sort he carries, even regarding us."

"I think not so, Kerlie. But we are not so sure of our obiect, whatever this may be. Yet we must not abandon it."

"Not abandon it," said Kersland, "certainly; but let us remain where we are, till we see what may come of this; a half hour is lacking yet to full sunrise."

"Be it so," replied Wallace; and they remain-

ed gazing fixedly in the direction of the Castle gate.

Another horseman gallopped up, precisely in the same manner as the first, and went through the same ceremony.

"Some great one," whispered Wallace. "Who can it be?"

They soon after heard the trampling of a great many steeds approaching slowly from the north. Wallace and Kerlie, both utterly fearless, could not resist the feeling of curiosity that arose within them; so, giving their steeds to two of the rest, they laid aside their spears, walked out with the slouching air of country men at a show, and, taking their stand at about a bowshot from the gate, awaited the arrival of the cavalcade, now in full view, and consisting of twelve or fifteen hundred men-at-arms, at the head of whom rode a stately Knight, in armour that shone in the first beams of the sun like burnished gold, and by his side several others, whose golden spurs and barred helmets shewed them to be of knightly degree. As they came nearer, and Wallace was able to distinguish

the bearing on the two banners, which were displayed, he whispered earnestly to his friend,— "The Piercy, by Heaven! See! the royal standard of England, and the square pennon of the proud lord, with his rather incongruous slogan, 'Esperance en Dieu.' By my faith, his hope rests more on himself than his God!"

"How stand we now?" asked Kerlie. "Will this business go on?"

"We must wait under covert; we shall soon find out." And after the array of Piercy had passed into the Castle, they lounged away towards their own party. The ire of Wallace rose, as he heard the shouts, and the flourish of drums and trumpets with which the Governor was welcomed by his countrymen.

"Hadst thou travelled with a smaller escort, they would not have shouted so loud; thou mightest have chanced to lose thy famed war-steed, and thy Milan vest of steel, as having no farther occasion for them. Yet why rail thus? I could almost forgive the Piercy, for there is some good in him; but for this underling of his

a worse never issued from the lawless hordes of the earth. No Turk nor Saracen e'er equalled him."

The commotion was great in the Castle, for the Lord Governor, in the exercise of his great caution, had given no notice of the time when he would visit any of his fortresses; and he had lodged at Glasgow the preceding night, in order that he might be able to reach Lanark very early on the morning. When the first courier arrived, the spearmen and archers were mustering in the court, for the purpose of conveying Angus to the fatal tree, and guarding the ground until the scene closed on him for ever; and the priest had just repaired to his dungeon to administer the last rites of religion. Heselrig had not expected the Governor for several days, and his arrival both astonished and alarmed him; but his presence of mind was never wanting, and he issued an order instantly for delaying the execution, and sending back the yeomen to their quarters; and, "Hark ye, Folkham!" said he, "let not the knaves prate! He can know nothing of our intentions yet in regard to our captive; be it mine

to let him condemn him in person. Stay! better let the yeomen stand arrayed in the court, and bid the men-at-arms muster also as fast as they can; it will shew diligence and dutiful respect! Ha? Folkham."

"Surely," replied the latter; "his Lordship will be pleased by our alertness;" and grinning at the quickness of his master, the 'Squire withdrew hastily.

When the Lord Piercy, with his large following, filed slowly over the drawbridge, through the gates, and into the court, he seemed pleased to find nearly the whole garrison under arms to receive him, and his lieutenant at their head. The men raised a loud acclamation of "Long live the noble Lord Piercy!" Heselrig, with his head uncovered, bowed low as the shouts rang in the air; and as he looked up, he saw gratified pride in the lofty visage of the proud Lord.

"Thou dost keep good watch and ward in times of peril, Sir Arthur Heselrig," said he, as he bent his stately form to the salutation of the latter and the shouts of the former; "and this early convo-

cation doth shew it." While he spoke, his sharp eye scanned keenly and carefully the forces before him; and his looks betokened gratification at their appearance.

He had many questions to ask after alighting, which related to the country in their neighbourhood, and to the intelligence which Heselrig had collected since he had last communicated with the Lord Governor, with the answers to which he seemed well satisfied. It was not till after the matin meal of ale and beef had been freely partaken of by him and his principal followers, that he began to converse about the persons held captive by his lieutenant. But then retiring to an inner apartment, from which all save the two were excluded— "And what of the fair Lady of Lammington, Arthur?" demanded he. "Is she yet obdurate and blind to her interest?"

"She is even so, my good Lord," replied Heselrig, with a sorrowful air. "I do fear me this outlaw hath a strong hold on her affections."

"Poh, man! A gay chevalier like thyself should be able to drive a poor hunted outlaw from her head or her heart either."

" It may not be, my Lord! at least yet she doth shew no change of intention, and she hath even betrayed sentiments and feelings so disloyal, that I have been obliged to restrict her to the Castle."

" What! she would seek the greenwood? Nay, she cannot be so foolish."

" I know not what she might do, but I was afraid to trust her abroad, saving under guard, and that the lady's spirit would not brook."

" I must see her and endeavour to open her eyes, Arthur; this doth savour of downright folly."

" Ah! my Lord, that is what I most ardently desired; but she hath been indisposed, and is this morn, as the Leech will inform your Lordship, so ill that she can see no one."

" That is unlucky," said Piercy, who was so occupied by his grand schemes, that this minor affair appeared to him as nothing—yet he wished to gratify his favourite—" Let me see this Leech," said he; " I have heard of him."

Galbraith came, and, bowing low, stood before the Governor, awaiting his commands. The latter regarded him with a stern and steadfast eye for

some seconds, but the Leech bore the searching glance without flinching. Heselrig had contrived to give him a hint that the Lady Marion was to be ill.

"How doth thy patient?" enquired the Lord Governor.

"Since her fever the lady hath been weak, and apt to be troubled in the nerves."

"Why, it was said always her nerves were too stout. That should favour thee, Heselrig."

"Under favour, my Lord, it is that sort of weakness which doth arise from uneasiness of mind and change of life," said the Leech; "together with her constant hankering after some one who is absent."

"Will she not desire to see the Lord Governor in her illness?"

"She may not deny my Lord; but it doth not seem to me the lady could converse so as to give satisfaction."

"And thou dost not advise it? Well, it doth appear I can do nothing for thee, Arthur, but approaching events may make a change in her sen-

timents," said Piercy, with a significant glance; "and it may be better to let her alone for a few days longer."

"So I did purpose, my Lord."

"Then, what of thy other captive; is he quiet?"

"By the rood, no! he hath made an attempt on my life," cried Heselrig, "whilst I was in discharge of my duty, in putting the question to an insolent burgher, who held intercourse with the rebel."

"How!" exclaimed Piercy. "Dared he to interrupt the course of justice?"

"Dare! my Lord? Pardon me, there is nothing which that man would not dare. He is more dangerous, in my mind, than Wallace himself. I do hold his fits of insanity to be but a cloak for outrage; and I aver that he can well control them when he is so minded."

"I doubt if thou art in the right there, Heselrig, for all men say that were his mind always the same, he would be mated by few. But give me the particulars of this attack on thee."

Heselrig then proceeded to relate, succinctly,

and with sundry aggravations, the occurrences in the Question-room, and his account was confirmed by the Leech. Piercy shook his head.

"He may be dangerous as thou dost say, Arthur; but if he be, it is because he is a madman. Seest thou not, my friend, that the most daring courage, unconnected with infirmity of mind, would not attempt an act like that. What! in the midst of armed men, and he naked and weaponless! It was the deed of downright madness."

Heselrig looked blank and disconcerted, but, recollecting the coolness exercised by Angus before that occasion, he returned to the charge.

"If my Lord will see him, the truth may be made apparent; but in my poor eyes this outlaw is a cool and a hardy traitor, who doth defy us all."

The Lord Piercy seemed thoughtful for a minute, then, shaking his head, "I doubt, Heselrig, if thou canst enter into the feelings, or understand the character of a man like this. He is altogether unlike those thou hast held intercourse with, for he hath principles which nothing but infirmity of intellect could foster. He doth act

in all things as if he cared for every one but himself."

"He doth feign well, I dare swear," muttered Heselrig.

"Nay, it is no feigning; he is an incarnation of those feelings and habits which men of the world believe to be fabulous, and without existence any where. I know him well, and have long had mine eye on him. I pray thee, give us the room awhile, good Leech."

Galbraith went away, and Heselrig began to wonder what was coming next; but he shrewdly guessed; for, as matters passed rapidly through his mind, it occurred to him, that his hastily contrived scheme of concealing the object for which the garrison was drawn out in the morning, could not succeed; accordingly he was startled, though scarcely surprised, by what followed.

"Heselrig," said the Lord Governor, "I would not humble thee before any of thy people; but thou knowest right well that thou hast incurred my severe displeasure."

As he spoke these words with stern gravity, he began to pace the apartment, as was his wont when agitated.

" Wherefore this proceeding against my prohibition? Didst thou think that thy intentions in regard to Angus were unknown to me? Go to! thou art a more shallow fool than I believed, thus to underrate me, who should know me so well."

Heselrig could bear all this patiently, for they were alone; so he mildly replied,—

" When my Lord forbade the execution of this malefactor, his attempt on my life had not taken place, and I did not deem it of such a nature that your Lordship would revoke the order which had been given, it did seem to me, in ignorance of the real man; but since my Lord doth know him so well, I must humbly crave pardon for my error, which did appear to me then to be a duty."

" Pshaw! Heselrig; thou dost hate this unfortunate gentleman, who is a known eccentric, and thou wert eager to destroy him. Did he not tell thee what would be the consequence? No! for his noble nature was too proud to plead to thee; but if thou hadst slain him, as thou didst purpose, all the Southrons in the hands of his wild followers had been torn limb from limb. Didst thou think

of this? Didst thou attempt any means of averting this catastrophe. No, thou didst not, though some of those captives are allied to ourselves."

Heselrig was abashed, and in appearance penitent; and his Lord went on, after a short pause,—

"Thou art not thyself, Arthur Heselrig, since this maiden came into thy possession; but thou must rouse thee now to great exertion, or it will be the worse for thee."

Heselrig then proceeded to say, that he was most unfortunate in having incurred the censure of his lord; but the future would compensate, he trusted, for the errors—errors in judgment—which he had been guilty of.

"My spies tell me of weapon-shawings around thee in all directions," continued the Lord Governor, as if unheeding what the other said; "and I cannot perceive thou hast done aught to prevent them. It may be thou hast not strength for it; but still thou mightest have held out strong remonstrance to such sturdy rebels as Bothwell and Douglas."

"My Lord, it is ever the case, that when a man

is unfortunately wrong in one respect, he is believed to be so in every other. It may please your Lordship to call to mind, that in my last statement regarding this district, I did mention the issue of several such demands to know the meaning of the musters in question, and one in especial, of Black William of Douglas, who told my messenger, that he would fling him into his Castle moat if he returned. As for forcing them to desist, my Lord knows, that if my garrison were weakened by a force at all likely, and the whole would be too small for such an enterprise, Wallace would come upon the Castle like the bursting of a thundercloud, and carry all before him."

"I did not say thou shouldst attempt to force them. We are not strong enough to keep the country in subjection; but we must strike a blow to put an end to the reign of William Wallace. Another time for that. Let us finish thy peculiar affairs in private. This lady hath been awarded thee; and if thou dost acquit thyself properly, her lands at least must be thine; but keep her out of thy thoughts at present, Arthur, or thou wilt lose thyself."

Piercy, with all his sagacity, had not perceived that hatred and revenge actuated his favourite more than either love or avarice, and he really believed that his passion for the Lady Marion had taken possession of his mind, and somewhat disordered it.

"How couldst thou imagine," enquired he, "that gibbeting her uncle would recommend thee to her? Thou art not thyself, Arthur, I tell thee again. If it is necessary that he should die, the law must judge him, and the odium be taken from thee; but before coming to any resolution regarding his trial or his doom, I must see him, in presence of the principal persons around us."

He arose, and proceeded to the great hall, while Heselrig gave instructions for bringing Angus into his presence, and commanded the attendance of the Lord Governor's train, and his own chief followers. There was much curiosity among the assemblage; but the countenance of Sir Richard Ridley alone shewed anxiety. Angus appeared, surrounded by the same spearmen, who had, on former occasions, guarded him, and stepped with

perfect composure into the space in front of Lord Piercy, left vacant for him. He stood erect, with his eyes quietly resting on the lordly features of the Governor, till the latter addressed him.

"Angus M'Rie," said he, "thou hast placed thyself and thy many deluded followers in rebellion to thy lawful sovereign. Wherefore hast thou done aught so wicked?"

"I have not rebelled against my king," replied Angus; "nor is there aught in my late conduct that can be justly styled wicked."

"I do not intend to dispute that point with thee; thy character hath been known to me for years, and I will shew thee that I think better of it than thou dost imagine. Wilt thou give me thy word that these spearmen are unnecessary here? I fear thee not in any sense."

Angus answered immediately,—

"I shall not attempt to escape, and I will injure no one. I have said it."

"Enough. Withdraw these men."

The men instantly departed.

"Now, in presence of us all, say why, when

thou wert denounced to me as in arms against the King in the hills of Cumnock, thou didst not come as summoned, and clear thyself."

"I put no faith in the Southron, and I did believe that I should be ensnared, for then I was living peaceably on the banks of Afton, where I had a place given to me."

"So it hath been said to me, and for that reason I question thee now," answered Piercy in a courteous tone; "and if thou hadst replied in person to our summons, thy residence might have been undisturbed thereafter."

"My countrymen were treated with no mercy," replied Angus; "and why should I expect milder treatment? But I defy any one, Scot or Southron, to say that my arm was lifted against any man in Cumnock, until I was assailed in mine own quiet nook, which I held from him whom thou hast considered the rightful lord, since the ancient race were despoiled of their inheritance."

"Thy family underwent the penalties of treason, and lost their large possessions, in consequence of resistance to royal authority, which might have been a warning to thee."

" They lost their lands," said Angus sternly, and rather loudly, " because a more powerful neighbour liked them."

Piercy perceived he had gone far enough in that strain, and so changed his mode of address. It seemed that he desired to bring him to declare all that had led him into his present position. " Thou wert not disturbed, until men said thou and thy people robbed the poor yeomen of their cattle and their goods."

" So thou wert deceived; but I know right well that those cattle were taken by Saxons in thine own pay, and sold to thy Captain of Cumnock; and one Baldock, if he had not reaped his reward, could testify to the fact; those beasts were stolen at night by this man and his abettors; for, being a spy, he had liberty of going in and out as he chose, and one of his agents brought them again and sold them at the Castle. I say not the captain of that hold knew of the cheat; I believe he did not."

Piercy shewed some surprise at this statement, and mused a little. He felt that it might be true, for his spies had sometimes betrayed his interests.

" Couldst thou not have stated all this, if it be true?" said Piercy, rather impatiently.

" If it be true! Proud Norman, if thou didst know me, thou wouldst not talk with an *if* of what I say," replied Angus, with a look of wrath.

" Thou art forgetting thyself, captive as thou art; more respect would be becoming."

" Respect! and to whom? Him who represents the oppressor of my country? Thou mayst slay me, as it is likely thou wilt, but thou shalt not make me bow to thee, hadst thou the might of England at thy back."

A sort of murmur ran round the hall at this bold speech, partaking more of admiration at the courage, than disgust at the import of it.

Piercy was evidently moved. There was something in the moral elevation of the poor outcast before him that reached the vein of better feeling which lay deep within him. He looked fixedly on the calm, firm expression of the prisoner's countenance for a moment, ere he replied, " I cannot permit of such language in my presence," said he, sternly; " and it was not to humble thee, but to do

thee justice that thou wert brought here. I know the rest of thy tale; and thou shalt find that if the Lord Governor can bring forward his accusations, he can also state what may be in extenuation of thy offences. Stand forward, Sir Richard Ridley."

Ridley stepped out of the circle, and, at the command of his lord, stated what had occurred when he was taken by Angus; how he was wrought up by the news his follower brought; yet when the latter wished to slay him where he stood, even in his frenzy he restrained him, and sent his captive safe through an array of wild men, who would have cut him to pieces without the protection of Angus.

The young Knight was heated by the recital to a state of excitement; and, after he had finished, he turned to the captive, and said, "Whatever be thy fate, noble Angus, thou shalt have the best wishes of one who owes thee a life, and who would do aught that honour warrants to save thee."

Angus put his hand over his eyes, and when he withdrew it, a tear sparkled in one of them.

"Thou hast not deceived me, young man; thou hast my thanks, but heed me not."

Piercy made a sign to Ridley, who drew back immediately. It was observed that Heselrig and his 'Squire whispered together, at this stage of the proceedings—the looks of the former being dark and lowering; at last, the latter stepped forward, "May it please my noble Lord," said he, "I was just stating to our Knight a tale which was brought unto me this morning, and which doth savour of a different feeling from that which preserved Sir Richard Ridley. It is said that Fulke de Brito hath been cut to pieces by the followers of Red Angus, and by his command."

"It is false!" cried Angus in an angry voice, while he glanced on Folkham like a chafed lion. The latter shrank back, thinking within himself, "Now shall he find whether he can be dangerous or not."

"Whence hadst thou this intelligence?" demanded the Lord Piercy gravely. "Canst thou bring forward the narrator?"

Folkham hesitated. "In sooth, my Lord, it

was one from the burgh who brought the tale; it may be false, I know not but it may be true, and such as it is, I deemed it proper to mention."

"Lord Piercy, thou hast conducted thine inquiry fairly; I am bound in justice to thee to say so, and therefore tell thee, for otherwise I should have disdained to state the fact, that the last order I gave my men when I was seized, was to respect the captive and treat him well."

"And that is true, for I heard it in his own tongue, which I partly understand," said the 'Squire who took Angus. Another mute expression of approbation escaped the assembled Southrons. It was evident they were interested in the prisoner. Piercy calmly recapitulated the different parts of the evidence for and against him, and then addressed his audience: "How say you, men of England? This man hath been in arms against the King, to which misapprehension at first led him; but he saved the life of an English knight, and he refused to take retribution on two different occasions, when, in accordance with

general opinion, he might have severely exacted it. Doth he deserve to die?"

"No!" was the immediate response, unanimously and emphatically pronounced.

Piercy looked on his captive with an expression of triumph on his countenance, while the latter was apparently touched by the general appearance of feeling in his favour. "Noble Angus," said Piercy, "thou wilt henceforth have a better opinion of English justice, and thou wilt believe that when measures seem to thee harsh and oppressive, they are imposed by the laws, not by the men whom thou dost see around thee. Thou art free, Angus of Cumnock, free on this spot, as if thou wert on thy native hill. I impose no condition on thee whatever."

"I thank you, noble Piercy," said Angus in a different tone from what he had hitherto used. "This act of thine hath indeed given me some insight into thy character, and that of those around thee; as good men rejoice, when they discover others to be better than they deemed, so I feel towards you; but since it must be measures, not

men, my quarrel is with, if I go free, my course for the liberation of Scotland must be open, and my resistance to Edward of England and his measures persevered in."

"Thou hast been treated as an honourable foe, not as a rebel; and thou art to choose thy line of conduct uncontrolled by me," said Piercy. Angus looked surprised, for the Lord Governor was not remarkable for mildness to those who were taken in arms against his Sovereign; but he was, as we have said, really touched by the unsophisticated purity of Angus's character; and had it been of a different stamp, he would have clogged his pardon with the condition which the latter probably expected, that he should not again bear arms against England. There was policy in it also, for he was aware that nothing would induce his captive to pledge himself to peace with England; but if left alone, and unfettered by such an obligation, he might think himself bound in honour to withdraw his followers from the field. Piercy then ordered the hall to be cleared that he might converse alone, for a few minutes, with his singular prisoner. He

represented to Angus the hopeless nature of the present attempt at throwing off the Southron yoke; the misery which his adherence to the cause of Wallace must cause to himself, his country, and his niece, whom he loved above every thing else. But Angus was firm as a rock, and freely represented the miserable condition of Scotland under Edward's usurpation, and the hopeless prospect of the people ever afterwards, if they submitted to it. And he took on himself to cast blame on the whole English nation, and Piercy in particular, for backing their ambitious King in his cruel and unprincipled aggressions, first in Wales, where he had completed and secured his conquest by the murder of all the bards. And he did not doubt that the same unscrupulous policy would be adopted in Scotland, in regard to every man who was bold enough to stand up for his country. Piercy, finding nothing could be done with Angus in this way, expressed a hope that he would overlook the fault of Heselrig, as proceeding from zeal and a false notion of his duty.

"I heed him not," said Angus, "it is not my

wont to preserve the memory of an injury. But I would warn thee against a man, who hath all the baser qualities, and none of the nobler, a specimen of which I have seen this day in thee. Believe me, noble Piercy, it is men like this Heselrig; who, as harsh, undiscriminating, and unrelenting ministers, bring disgrace and discredit on those who employ them, and are responsible for their actions. He hath persecuted an unfortunate lady with his most disagreeable addresses, until she is close prisoner in his power, to be released only by the command of his superiors, or the success of his rival."

Piercy interrupted him here. "This lady is a ward of the crown, and cannot be released under present circumstances, until she is bestowed in marriage; because, without consulting her lawful guardian, the King (or his representative), she hath affianced herself to a rebel, now openly opposed to him. I wish to avoid this subject, for thou canst not alter what hath been arranged."

"Then leaving this innocent maiden, in the hold of a faitour and miscreant, as I hold Heselrig to

be, is to me a punishment almost as severe as that which he designed for me. Yet, if thou wilt promise that he shall not injure her, it will be some comfort. I will rely now somewhat on thee."

"Thou mayest rest assured, that, if Arthur Heselrig doth, in any way, evil entreat this noble damsel, he shall render a full and severe account to me," replied Piercy. "But thou dost carry thy dislike too far. He is too much enamoured to imagine even any thing disagreeable beyond the present restraint."

"I accept thy promise, as some alleviation of my anxiety," said Angus; "but as for thy lieutenant, nothing can change the opinion I entertain of him."

It may be here remarked, that Piercy, besides his desire to let Angus depart better disposed towards him, on account of his influence with his countrymen, had the additional reason for bearing with him, that he believed him, with all his great qualities, to be partially of unsound mind; and therefore, his plain speaking was not to be resented like that of another person.

"We part then, not as friends, noble Angus, but, if as foes, at least honourable ones, who understand each other; and it is proper now, when we meet perhaps for the last time, that I tell thee why the life of a leader so noted among the outlaw bands hath been spared. Young Ridley first interceded for thee, and with so much earnestness, that I was induced to inquire particularly into thy previous life, which was partly known to me before. I found thou hadst suffered wrong at the commencement of thy career, and thou hadst not been guilty of any crime against the crown, saving the act of defending thyself from forces sent to take thee under wrong information, when thou wert yet an innocent man. This is my justification to King Edward, and I doubt not it will suffice."

"Let me also speak frankly to thee, Lord Piercy. Wert thou uniformly just and forbearing, as thou hast been with me, and were thy subordinate chiefs such men as young Ridley, instead of petty tyrants like Heselrig, the rule of Edward might not have been the grievance it is, especially with such a weakling of our own as Balliol."

" Part we then," said Piercy, " on this clear understanding of each other. Hast thou aught else to say?" perceiving that Angus seemed desirous of adding something.

" I have a faithful follower, who hath been seized by Heselrig, while looking for intelligence of me in Lanark. He hath suffered as much and been as guiltless as I."

" He shall go with thee," said Piercy at once; " I would not deny thee a trifle like that. Fare-thee-well, then, noble Angus!"

" And well fare thou, noble Lord; I shall think better of thee than I did before, in all time coming," replied Angus.

Piercy then called his attendants and ordered them to conduct him outside of the gates, and to send his follower to him there. Ridley and a few others of the nobler Southrons joyfully undertook this task. They admired the bold and straightforward conduct of Angus, who warmly shook Ridley's hand on parting, and courteously thanked the rest.

" A noble cock of the mountain, by my word!" said old Sir Robert Senhouse, after parting with

him; "It joys me much to see him free!" And all the others cordially joined in the observation.

Angus desired much to see Marion; but he perceived, in the mood that Piercy was in, he could not relish the proposal, and, under the circumstances, he deemed it best to keep off the subject.

CHAPTER XI.

There is pity in many, is there any in him ?
No ! ruth is a strange guest with Halbert the grim.
Halbert the Grim.

Heselrig, during the proceedings just narrated, kept himself apart from his old comrades of Piercy's household, ruminating in gloomy discontent over the humiliating reversal of the doom he had passed on his prisoner, with all its attending circumstances. It was necessary, however, before the Lord Governor departed, to smooth his brows and behave blandly; for the only person he really stood in awe of was the Lord Piercy. On this occasion the latter was disposed to be complacent, after treating him so cavalierly, and at a time when his services, always duly appreciated, were soon to be urgently demanded on the field.

The short space before the departure of the Lord Governor, therefore, passed pleasantly enough between them. Piercy was now maturing his plans for the sudden onslaught on Wallace's entrenchments in the forest, which was to destroy his power utterly; and in this progress through the district under his rule, he had been gradually and, as it were, stealthily concentrating his forces towards Glasgow and its neighbourhood. He left orders with all his commanders, in the several localities he visited, to be in readiness to issue forth at an hour's warning, without letting any of them into the details of his plans; and Heselrig believed from what passed between them, that many days must yet elapse before the blow could be struck; yet he was eager for action, and burning with increased hatred to Wallace and all his abettors, and he was looking forward to consolation, for his present mortification, in the projected practices of Galbraith, which would place the unsuspecting Marion at his mercy in every way. No sooner, therefore, had his lord left the Castle, on his return to Glasgow, than was he closeted with the Leech.

Both looked grave and anxious, but Heselrig's aspect had a sullen ferocity in it, which the other had not observed before. "To the devil," said he, "with all half measures, Black Gilbert. I am even mad with rage and mortification, and would agree to any thing that might compass my revenge. Then tell me the dangers arising out of thy scheme, and its full effect. I feared to ask like a fool erewhile, now I long to hear the worst—the very worst; for there is something always reserved, I know, by those lowering brows of thine."

The Leech cast on him a glance like the glare of a wolf. "If thou dost desire revenge for deep injury, that is, dire revenge, thou hast the means here," said he, holding up a vial containing a small quantity of coloured liquid. "Ten drops of that liquor will dissipate, like a fume, all memory of former objects of passion, if, within forty and eight hours, this other precious balm be applied; but lacking the latter, death must ensue in three days from the time the first is taken."

"So I understand it," replied Heselrig, "and

that part doth not alarm me *now*," he laid an emphasis on the word; "but tell me more fully the consequence if both drugs be administered."

"The damsel shall awake from a deep sleep, and she shall have no remembrance of those whom she formerly loved; but the first who sees her—mark this well!—is likely to hold the first place in her affections."

"Didst thou not look so fell and so deadly, Galbraith, I should fancy there was jugglery in what thou art about to do; but I cannot mistake thy looks."

"Thou needst not. A purpose so cruel cannot be matured in a mind that knows remorse. Listen farther! That bright intellect which doth raise the damsel above her sex, shall be dislodged from her yet beautiful form, and the intelligence of a child substituted. Thou mayest then marry or do what else thou wilt with impunity."

"Thou dost delight me!" exclaimed Heselrig.

"Hear yet farther. In such a state the body cannot long continue to cumber this earth—she will not live long."

"The better, man! By that time I shall have all I wish for. Thou art my best friend, Galbraith," said he, grasping the hand of the Leech, which shook in his gripe, to Heselrig's great surprise. "Art thou unwell?"

"Somewhat disordered. This watching at night, and dealing with deadly drugs, doth in some sort discompose one; but I shall soon be better and fit for my task."

"Thy heart cannot fail thee, I am sure."

"Fear not that—thou art matched, Sir Arthur Heselrig."

From the day that Angus was permitted to visit the forlorn Marion, she had lived in a state of suspense and anxiety regarding him especially. Wallace, she felt, would protect himself; and as to the approaching crisis in his fate, she had a heroine's confidence in it; but her uncle was so easily roused into fits of passionate excitement, that she trembled to think how likely it was that he would raise the brutal and revengeful passions of Heselrig. Dora could only get very scanty information from such of the menials as she might converse with; but it

was precisely what should have been kept from her that she obtained. She had been told of the attack on Heselrig in the Question-room, and the consequent doom of Angus, which had plunged her lady into the deepest anguish, that lasted throughout the night.

The bustle attending the Lord Piercy's arrival had been distinctly heard in her remote apartments; and throughout the whole forenoon she had been in the most torturing anxiety to discover what the fate of her uncle was; for Dora had not been successful in her attempts to glean information; and when the Leech entered her ante-room after his conversation with Heselrig, she was really unwell. "O good Leech," said she, immediately on seeing him, "thy looks are dark, but thou hast been ever kind to me. I pray you tell me, is Angus of Cumnock alive?" and as she spoke the words she grasped the physician's arm convulsively.

"He is, lady," was the immediate reply, and he went on while she clasped her hands and raised her eyes to Heaven. "Alive and well; he hath left the Castle free as the lion of the desert."

"O Heaven be praised! Then Heselrig relented?"

"The Lord Governor in person hath discharged the captive," said the Leech, "for he hath been here to-day."

"I ever heard the Piercy, amidst all his faults, had some good qualties; he hath my warmest thanks and God will overlook some evil deeds for just behaviour like this."

She covered her eyes for a moment with her hand, while Dora was speaking energetically, as if addressing some unseen person in her native tongue.

"Thou hast a kind heart, maiden," said the Leech in the same language, "and a grateful one. I fear me, the lady is not in health, her looks betoken illness."

"She hath been much disturbed, but thy blessed news will restore her. Thou hast been ever kind and good to her."

"It is my duty as physician to minister to the mind as well as the body," replied Galbraith; and his manner was mild and gentle, as he pulled the vial from beneath his cloak.

"See here, lady, I guessed thou wouldst be disquieted, and have brought some drops that will restore thee to peace and quietness." So saying, he took a cup, and pouring out a little water, with a steady hand, he counted the requisite number of drops, and handed the potion to her.

"Drink, lady," said he, "and be happy."

She took the draught and drank it instantly, as a thing of trifling moment.

The Leech turned a little aside while she spoke.

"Dora speaks truly of thee, my kind physician; albeit, thy dark looks at first did breed distrust in me; it were sin and shame not to acknowledge thy great care and attention."

"Lady," said Galbraith, with looks still averted, I have done my duty, and time hath yet to shew if I deserve thy gratitude. Thou art but feeble; let me counsel thee to seek thy sleeping chamber, and in it repose chiefly for the next two days; nature is exhausted, and doth lack the restorative power of rest, which, now that the mind is easy, will not be denied thee."

"Thy words are sweet and soothing, even like

thy potent medicines, which have ever acted on me most beneficially."

"Then take my counsel, gentle lady, and God be with you!" And he withdrew.

"I feel better already, dear Dora," said Marion, "and have no desire for rest. Surely he is a blessed Leech, but a most mysterious man, and nature hath denied him the gift of a comely form."

"He is awful, dear lady, and did he not speak so kindly, I should tremble to behold him; and as I have often told thee, the people in this castle regard him as one who doth hold converse with invisible spirits—Heaven bless us!"

"He hath a bad aspect, doubtless, and if such thing is permitted, he may be a necromancer; just in such a form could I fancy the soul of one familiar with demons to reside."

"Blessed Virgin, protect us from unholy thoughts! It is well we have not trusted him, my Dora, since he is the friend of Heselrig; yet we are ungrateful, it may be, to doubt him, for he hath ever been soft and kind to us."

"Truly he hath, but as thy wisdom suggested,

and prevented my speaking openly to him, it may be but an assumed semblance of good to beguile us."

"Therefore I say, it is perhaps lucky he knoweth not our secret thoughts."

"Dear lady," said Dora, "I have sometimes thought, while he spoke blandly, and looked kindly, of the serpent of old in the blessed garden."

"The people fear him, thou hast told me, Dora."

"More than their harsh lord; and they say he doth walk at night, like an evil spirit, haunting churchyards and such places, where the deadly hemlock and other life-destroying plants pollute the air; and from those fearful and murky dens he doth draw the healing drugs that restore the dying to life; but, lady, they also say he doth find there the poisons which remove the strong from this world, whom no disease hath scathed; and ever when men speak of him, they do lower the voice and shake the head." And Dora, as she spoke, seemed to be under the same fear; for she suited the action to the word precisely.

"Those tales, my Dora, may arise from the

strange and mysterious manner in which the man doth comport himself. Thou hast told me, that, saving his lord, he hath fellowship with none, and that no one hath ever been within his chamber since he hath been here."

"Not one; and sure am I, that no bribe would induce any one to enter it. Blessed saints! they say he hath strange and frightful forms there, living or dead, no one doth know; but since the 'Squire Folkham, who hath much curiosity, dared to listen one night at the door, and heard, what he will swear, were voices not of this earth, no one will go near that dreadful turret."

"And that Folkham was frightened sufficiently, I hope. I dislike him more than the Leech."

"Nay, he paid for his curiosity; for the Leech heard some sound outside, and, pulling open the door in the dark, did stumble over the 'Squire; so, without asking any questions of the latter, who was too frightened to speak, he took a cudgel he had in hand, and beat him till he recovered his voice, and roared and ran, thinking that twenty evil spirits were upon him."

Marion's thoughts had long wandered from the Leech, and she scarcely heard her maiden as she ran on about him.

"Heed him not farther, Dora; it is even a proof of his strange nature, that he hath power to occupy our thoughts at such a time—mine uncle free, and my glorious Wallace fast completing his preparations for our deliverance! O that I could be with them, to share their brave toil, their noble dangers! What thinkst thou they are doing now? whom hath he with him?"

"I know their names that will live for ever," said Dora. "There is Boyd, Auchinleck, Kerlie, Stephen Ireland; those never leave him."

"And the doughty Douglas, the chivalrous Murray, the gallant Crawford! O my Dora, their name is legion! We shall find, on the evening of some glorious day, the brightest names of Scotland in this Castle hall, after a well fought field, to restore us to liberty and happiness."

Her eyes sparkled as she spoke, and she paced the room, as if she longed to fly from its confining walls to the forest haunt of her friends.

The simple Dora caught her enthusiasm, and went on reciting the names of warriors who had distinguished themselves at Allanton.

"And forget we good Cormack, lady, he who was second only to his Chief, although he be but lowly."

"I marvel if that faithful youth doth live. Mine uncle said he was employed in an office of great peril."

"O, doubtless! for I did hear lately that the reward had been doubled for his capture."

"May Heaven protect him, and all who aid the holy cause!"

"I marvel if my dear uncle was prevented from seeing me ere he left this hold. It must be so, or I should have seen him. This Lord Piercy is crafty, yet he is just at times, and merciful. I long to ask the Leech, when he shall return, about mine uncle. Perchance, as my questions relate not to Heselrig, he will inform me."

"He will sometimes answer, and when he doth not, he signifieth ever that it is for our own safety to be in ignorance."

" That may be only his craft to induce belief that he is our friend ; and, good friend, I fear me, his soft words are only meant to aid the good effects of his medicaments ; but I feel now that I want rest, my Dora ; my limbs wax weary." She walked into her sleeping apartment, and lay down, all unconscious of the wicked plotting against her, and soon closed her eyes in sleep.

Heselrig awaited with impatience the return of the Leech, after he had administered the potion, on which he rested his hopes of gaining the objects of all his scheming, and which might now be comprehended in one word—revenge. Wallace had injured him deeply, as hath been said elsewhere, by forestalling him in the affections of Marion, for in that light he regarded the mutual affection of the two, although it was contracted before either had seen him. Marion had stung him, and wounded his pride, by shewing unequivocally, both by word and deed, that she looked on Wallace as incomparably superior to him, and placing him in the position of a despised and a rejected suitor ; and Angus had assaulted him, in presence of his

own people, and humbled him to the dust; while, worse than that, Lord Piercy had baffled and debarred him from taking vengeance. Altogether, it might be said of him now, that the feeling towards Marion which bore, at one time, the semblance of love, had merged in the other passions that arose within him and took possession of his mind. He was assured of her lands whatever might happen; and if she sunk under the plot which had been entered into, the Lord Governor could easily be deceived into the belief, that she died from natural causes. What his fell purpose was may be inferred from his conversation with Galbraith, which has just been detailed, and what passed between the two now.

The Leech entered with his usual composed and portentous look.

"Hast thou done it?" enquired Heselrig, rising eagerly, and going up to him.

"I have," was the reply.

"Thou art the very prince of Leeches!"

"Not so, Sir Arthur Heselrig, I must yield to thee; thou art the chief and prince of—poisoners."

"How! this to me!"

"Surely to thee! Know, guilt doth make all men equal, and thou art now, though the Chief of Lanark's lordly castle, no better than Black Gilbert the poisoning Monk!"

Whilst he spoke, Galbraith looked full upon him, and as fearlessly, as if in presence of the meanest menial of his halls.

"Nay, as I said, thou art worse than the poor monk who doth but obey the orders of his lord."

Heselrig regarded him with a stern eye for some seconds, but he quailed not.

"What dost thou mean by this language?" asked he.

"Nothing," replied the Leech, "but to let thee understand fully that this act is thine, not mine; for I am only the instrument."

"Is that all? what care I how thou dost think? Positively thou art in some things a fool. Dost thou try thy monkish tricks to get me to buy thy prayers next? Truly, Gilbert, thy masses must be effectual, seeing thou art so good a Christian!"

"I am not a good Christian, and I did not try

to get thee to pay for masses in forgiveness of thy sins."

"Then, why talk to me in that strain?"

"Why? Perhaps to see what thou really art; and whether thy soul is steeped deep enough in guilt, to be hardened against what is before thee."

Heselrig smiled scornfully. "Thou knowest I have had dealings with what are called young and innocent maidens before, and dost thou see aught like fear or reluctance about me now? I have here, man," continued he, passionately, "an additional motive to the mere gratification of passion—the thirst of revenge! which gnaweth like a vulture at my very vitals. Thou canst understand that, Black Gilbert of Crossraguell?"

"Now thou dost speak to the purpose," said Galbraith. "Thou wouldst ruin this damsel and betray her, because thou canst not gain her heart, and thou wilt, with thy lord's help, be seised in her lands; by so doing thou wilt break the hearts of her uncle and the Wallace Wight."

"Thou wouldst induce me to think thou didst not know of all this before. I see the very men-

tion of it doth please thee; but thou wert no stranger to my purpose."

"I might guess, but it was never fully divulged. It is said thou art going to fight with the outlaws forthwith; what if they forestall thee?"

"How dost thou mean?"

"Slay thee!"

"Pooh! Arthur Heselrig hath seen many a stricken field, my friend; too many to fall by the vile hand of an outlaw."

"Men say these Scots are strong, and understand this butchering trade well. Thou mayest be cheated."

"Butchering trade! thou hast choice words this day, Gilbert, or rather Galbraith; but thou thyself wouldst make a good fighter, or I am deceived. Thou art bold and strong; and for the inclination, thou dost not want it."

"True; the inclination to kill, but not to be killed—there is a difference."

Wallace and his party in the wood waited for a short time, in expectation of some other movement in the Castle, which would indicate to them the

fate of Angus; but becoming sensible that he could not long remain there without being discovered, he hazarded again the experiment of allowing Kersland to play the spy on the warders or sentinels at the gates. He yielded this point to the latter, on account of the greater risk he ran of discovery there; and Kerlie acquitted himself with his usual dexterity, having represented that he was a countryman desirous of selling some corn to the garrison, which he knew would always be a good introduction. The warder immediately told him to enter; but this not being his intention, he said that he merely wished to know if the article was wanted, and he would fetch it at once if it could be taken. The warder assured him of its being welcome, and they gradually entered into a little gossiping conversation, during which Kerlie asked what had become of the hanging.

"O, it is all off, friend; thou shalt see no sight this time. The great Lord hath pardoned the Cumnock Chief."

"And disappointed half the country round of a rare execution," said Kersland. "Well! these

great ones care not for the comfort of poor folks;" and with a sulky, mortified look, the wily Kerlie moved off.

Soon afterwards the whole of the small party rode quietly through the wood, passing south of the church, to gain the highway to Glasgow, which they had scarcely reached when they descried on the road, at some distance, a troop of thirty or forty men on horseback, who seemed to be all armed. "Now," said Wallace, "good St Andrew, make those known to us as Southrons!"

"God grant they may be!" ejaculated most of the band; for their spirits had been on the stretch since morning in expectation of some stirring event; and they felt all the lassitude and lowness of spirit consequent on reaction, until the appearance of the strangers offered a chance of renewed excitement. As the parties approached each other, the followers of Wallace appeared to the strangers a crowd of countrymen riding together, as was the custom then, for mutual protection, to some market or fair in the neighbourhood. As they came nearer, to the great joy of Wallace, the strangers

bore unmistakeable evidence of being Southron men-at-arms; and from the appearance of a flock of cattle behind them, and other tokens, most likely a foraging party from the Castle. The garrison of the latter, having great difficulty in getting supplies, were often forced to exact, from the unhappy peasants around, the scanty means they possessed of supporting their families; and wherever a fortress, remote from the seat of a chief ruler, existed in Scotland, famine and all its attending evils prevailed.

It is true Edward sent, at last, provisions for his troops, but they were scantily furnished and inadequate to the purpose. In this instance, as the country had been scoured very frequently of late, they had been obliged to seize whatever they could get, or return empty-handed, which Foster, the commander of the party, dared not to do, as Heselrig would have almost cashiered him (if the word had been known then) for attending to the lamentations of a parcel of boors. The consequence of this was, that the wretched inhabitants, seeing nothing but starvation before them, ran desperately

after their abstracted chattels, calling on the English to have mercy on them. Foster was obliged to disregard their cries, but he prevented the men from beating them, as some of the most surly were inclined to do. Thus, when the two parties came close to each other, the men-at-arms rode in front, the cattle in the middle, with a wain or two of corn under the charge of yeomen on foot, and, in the rear, a crowd of half-starved and despairing country people. Wallace understood the whole affair immediately, and though the enemy were two to one, he had no hesitation, for his own were all picked men.

"Stand out of the way; keep on one side, good fellows, and let the cattle pass," said Foster to the seeming peasants.

"Are those beasts thine," asked Wallace; "it doth seem to me doubtful, for there are men and women in the rear, who claim them." By this time he and his men were in line across the road, completely obstructing it.

"How now, knave, wouldst thou stop a royal officer?"

"On them, my merry men!" cried Wallace in a voice that made the Southrons start. The charge was unexpected, and at least a dozen of the English were dismounted, but the rest stood stoutly to it for a few minutes; until finding, after a hard struggle, two-thirds of their number disabled, they started off in the direction of Lanark, leaving several prisoners and all the booty. With the reckless impetuosity, unchecked by fear, which distinguished the more youthful of the Scots, the chase was continued to within a few hundred paces of Lanark burgh.

Wallace, with the more sage and wary of his party, remained on the ground; and he blew his horn repeatedly to call back his followers, who would, in such a quarter, be more likely to meet a number of enemies, than any armed friend; but some time elapsed ere they were gathered together. In the meantime, he entered into conversation with the poor people who had followed the Southrons, and they, readily guessing who he was, were overcome with joy and gratitude. "But," said Wallace, "will they not return upon you—are you safe?"

"O no," replied one, "we have never been safe from their demands; but sometimes they pay a little, and we do not dare to complain if we have enough to keep us alive. But to-day they have taken the very miserable leavings of former raids upon us, which were considered necessary to our mere existence."

"Unjust and cruel oppressors," said Wallace sternly to the English prisoners, among whom was Foster, "it would be but justice to starve ye all for twenty-four hours, which I take it would be death to a Southron. Canst thou say any thing for thyself?"

"Nothing, indeed, excepting that I obeyed orders," replied Foster, with a humble look, as if ashamed of himself.

"Thou art a gentleman, not a serf, and thou shouldst not take suit and service with a harsh tyrant. Better want land and fee for ever!"

Wallace then turned from the captives, and taking a few of his poor countrymen aside, entered into an earnest conversation with them, during which he seemed to be giving some direction, and impressing it particularly on them.

They then, with their wives, clamorously calling down blessings on their deliverer, took the way home joyously. Soon afterwards, the conquering and pursuing party returned at the gallop; and two came with them on Southron steeds, who were supposed at first to be additional prisoners, but on a nearer approach, to the great joy of the band, they proved to be Angus and his follower whom they had met on their way to the outlaw leaguer.

"Now God be praised!" cried Wallace eagerly, "that I see thee safe and well!"

"As well as heart can wish, William Wallace, no thanks to the worthy Knight who rules so gently here."

"But many to the worthier lord who rules him," said Wallace with a smile; "is it not so, my father?"

"Truly, I think better of him than when we spoke before on that subject. But less from what he hath done to me, than other matters. Thou hast some prisoners, I see," casting a glance at Foster and his men, "and thou must let them go ransomless for my sake."

He then told how Piercy had set him free, un-

shackled by any condition whatever. Wallace said nothing, but he thought that Piercy had great insight into character; "and he did not even express a wish regarding De Brito, who is of his own blood, so anxions was he to leave every thing to my honour and right feeling."

"I doubt if he doth care a silver penny for his cousin, who is no cousin after all; but thou art a prize worth having, and thou mayest bestow my captives as thou wilt."

"Return then to thy Knight, thou and thy fellows, and tell them that Angus M'Rie doth send thee back to him in requital of what the Governor did for him; and say also, that De Brito shall be sent to his own domain, as he doth style his farm, when the lady is free; but his serfs, being now free men of the forest, as I trust all in Scotland shall soon be, he must hereafter till his lands by the aid of free-men."

Foster bowed to Angus and to Wallace and retired, followed by his men, and without speaking.

"Now, my brave boy," continued Angus, heartily, "I am again free to join thee with all the might

I may against our enemies; for thou hast, and right speedily, given me the means of being quits with Piercy, without which I doubt if I could, with honour, have shared in the battle which must soon be fought. Art thou ready?"

"Fast getting ready at least, my father; tell me first of her."

They then entered into a long conversation, during which Angus related all that happened to him, his interview with Marion, and the hopeless nature, from what he saw, of applying to Piercy for another ere he left the Castle; and Wallace proceeded to instruct him in his plans and arrangements, which were of a complicated and peculiar description, as shall presently appear. The party journeyed but a short distance on the highway, having turned off to the right in a direction which was new to Angus, who enquired if he had abandoned his former quarters, and was answered, that the Lord Piercy and his indefatigable spies at least believed he had not, but he shewed him a system of strategy, for which he expected approbation and applause.

CHAPTER XII.

Yes, I assure you, he is a conjuror,
The devil's master, and commands him.
Fair Maid of the Inn.

THE rewards offered by the Lord Governor latterly for information regarding the motions of Wallace were so high, that many of his band were induced to brave all the dangers, great as they might be, which beset the acquisition of it. Wallace soon discovered, from his own faithful scouts stationed at different parts of the forest, that strange men, in various disguises, were flitting about on sundry pretences, and that they had been offering large bribes to the country people who would inform them regarding Wallace's camps and the number and strength of each, but in vain, for none of them would betray him. He told his scouts not

to seize any of these men, but to let them pass as if all they said was believed.

He then laid a plan before his chiefs, for deceiving Piercy, which was highly approved by all, and carried into effect forthwith. It was this. He selected a number of acute and intelligent men from his band, and gave them directions to occupy themselves in the fields, dressed like serfs or farm servants, disguises which could be easily got, and the tenants of the ground would gladly connive at any occupation they might fix upon. These men, he expected, would be tampered with by the Southron spies, and he instructed them on every point how to conduct themselves. The event justified his expectations. They were soon assailed by all the cunning of the most dexterous in Piercy's service; and they played their parts so admirably, that the English blessed their stars for sending them such luck. They took their money, and readily answered all questions; and, finally, clenched their information, by offering to take them to the chief camp in perfect security, so that they might behold with their own eyes. This

rather startled them, although very agreeable confirmation of the truth of the intelligence furnished.

At length, two of the boldest consented to assume a garb similar to that of their informants, knowing that the reward would be enormous, and it was agreed that the experiment should be tried next day. Accordingly, with beating hearts, yet sharp eyes, they followed their guides into the recesses of the forest, and after a tedious walk, reached the camp of Wallace, which, to their surprise, they found to be a simple range of low huts, in which some hundreds of outlaws were lodged and huddled together in a wretched manner. Many of them had a truly miserable appearance, being squalid and sickly; and the whole aspect of the place was such as to fill the Southrons with contempt for the strength and the power of the outlaws. They were allowed to gaze for some time around them, and to converse as they thought proper with the people of the place; but they were overjoyed with their good fortune, and in fear every moment of meeting with Wallace himself, and did not prolong their visit beyond the

shortest space possible for their purpose. They then sauntered back in the same fashion as they came.

Wallace had congregated in this spot (one of his smallest encampments) all the invalids of the band; those who were yet suffering from the effects of wounds received at Allanton, and in sundry small skirmishes in which they had been engaged; and in a place not more than a quarter of a mile from this, he had been busily engaged from the day of Sir Ranald's embassy to him, in fortifying and preparing the ground on which he meant to compel the Southron to fight the next battle. Of this the spies were not allowed to get the slightest glimpse, and thus they went on their way rejoicing to Ayr, to report the success of their exertions. No truce could be said to exist while the present negotiation was pending. In fact a truce could scarcely exist between the parties. Although Piercy fancied that he might deceive the outlaws, he never altogether even kept up the appearance of peace between him and the Scots, for he allowed the country to be forayed in the

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Wallace had congregated in this spot (one of his smallest encampments) all the invalids of the band; those who were yet suffering from the effects of wounds received at Allanton, and in sundry small skirmishes in which they had been engaged; and in a place not more than a quarter of a mile from this, he had been busily engaged from the day of Sir Ranald's embassy to him, in fortifying and preparing the ground on which he meant to compel the Southron to fight the next battle. Of this the spies were not allowed to get the slightest glimpse, and thus they went on their way rejoicing to Ayr, to report the success of their exertions. No truce could be said to exist while the present negotiation was pending. In fact a truce could scarcely exist between the parties. Although Piercy fancied that he might deceive the outlaws, he never altogether even kept up the appearance of peace between him and the Scots, for he allowed the country to be forayed in the

manner just shewn for provisions, which Wallace resented, as we have narrated, on all similar occasions by attacking the party. Still it was not a state of active warfare; but Wallace and his chiefs saw from the signs around him that such might be looked for immediately, and hastened his preparations with all diligence.

A considerable accession to his strength had been received from Ayrshire and Galloway, besides other places, nearly all furnished with forty days' provisions, after the old Scottish fashion, and the powerful lords of Bothwell and Douglasdale were ready to bring forward their followers, provided in a similar manner, on the shortest notice. Wallace and his men, while the spoil of Allanton lasted, did not require the assistance of others in obtaining provisions; but when that was expended, they were indebted to the well-affected barons for supplies, which were forwarded by night, and sometimes from a considerable distance, but chiefly from his Ayrshire supporters. The deer, which then abounded in a country that was almost all forest, also furnished

them with food to some extent. On the whole, his band were in good condition, and as inured to danger and fatigue, well fitted for the hardships of war in whatever shape they might come.

The spear being the principal weapon among them—for their skill in archery was far inferior to that of the English—he had them still regularly and severely drilled to the use of it, and especially the evolutions of the schiltron, on which his chief dependance was placed; and the leading men of his band, in many cases the original lords of those they commanded, had the task of training conducted under their immediate superintendance. It has been already said that the oppression, especially of the class of serfs under English domination, was what Wallace resented particularly; and this being understood, he was looked on as the friend of those unhappy persons, and all of them who saw a prospect of gaining his encampment deserted from the Southron lords to whom they had been assigned with the lands to which they bebelonged, and joined him. These were placed under the different leaders, and put also in the re-

gular course of training. He had but few horsemen, his desire being to perfect his adherents in the spear and the schiltron, as the best counterpoise for the superiority of the English men-at-arms, and to use his own followers of the latter class to keep down or disperse the bowmen of the enemy, always the most formidable and deadly antagonists the Scots encountered in their Southron wars. The bow was a weapon in which his countrymen never excelled, while the English brought it to such perfection, that their chief victories can be distinctly traced to its use. Nevertheless, the men under Angus all practised archery, and were taught some simple manœuvres, in which they were guided by the notes of a horn. They also carried spears, which they stuck in the ground, in front of their position, when shooting with their bows, and were taught to use against a charge of horsemen to protect themselves. Each man, too, had by his side a short sword or whinger, long worn in Scotland, even in peaceful times, as a defensive weapon. Many of the Cumnock men had shirts of mail, and some of the others jacks; but the

greater portion of these archers had scarcely any thing that could be called armour; and it was necessary, therefore, that they should keep aloof and avoid close fighting.

Such was the condition of the army which Wallace had mustered for a crisis, that was in the eyes of all to decide the dominion of Scotland; for, if he succeeded, the whole country would be up in arms, and the Southron yoke thrown off immediately, until it might be reimposed by the superior numbers of the English, which was not likely, the feeling being so strong and so universal against the usurpation of Edward. On the other hand, the English were strong in their knights, esquires, and men-at-arms, who were generally better armed than those of the Scots, and besides infinitely more numerous. It was to resist them that Wallace was most anxious to make his men perfect in the manœuvres of the schiltron, on all occasions, and everywhere; and it was to render this formidable chivalry unavailable as such, that he fortified his position and endeavoured to make the ground unsuitable for horsemen.

The archers he also was most desirous of baffling in a way that will appear hereafter. The great influence he had obtained over the minds of the leading men who joined him was shewn in the number of serfs emancipated by them, and converted into hardy warriors, eager and resolute in support of a system by which they gained so much, and in the continuance of which they were so deeply interested. These all regarded Cormack as a sort of embodiment of the spirit of serfdom, and the favour shewn him by Wallace was received as an earnest of his good will and good intentions towards their unfortunate class. His situation of principal and confidential officer or henchman was one which the best born youths in the band would have striven to obtain; yet no one grudged it to Cormack, so universally was he esteemed. The present mysterious occupation in which he was engaged, since the decided opinion expressed by Wallace, was looked on as one of great trust, and consequently highly honourable.

It was whispered among them that he rode about all night, never resting in one place, excepting in

some retired locality, throughout the day, during which he took all the rest he obtained; and he never appeared in the camp but in darkness; and always, after being alone with his master for some time, he departed.

There was nothing particularly remarkable in all this, for their chief had many emissaries who went and came without holding any communication with the rest of the band. It was only singular in one thing—that his reports were confined to Wallace, while his leaders were partakers of all the intelligence brought by the other scouts.

When Foster's discomfited party ran furiously up to the gates of the Castle, flying apparently still from a victorious foe, an alarm was given by the warders, and some confusion arose in consequence. Great was the wrath and surprise of Heselrig that the outlaws should venture, at a time almost of truce, to attack his men, even under the walls of his fortress; and he augured from it that they were stronger than his lord believed them to be. But Folkham suggested that this was no proof of the fact; "for," said he, "this Wallace

hath no sense of danger, and doth make such escapades as would ruin any leader, under a prudent commander. All that I imply from it is, that he is a thoughtless lad, and unfit to rule such a body of men."

"But what doth he there? He would not come so near without a motive."

"Men say he doth delight in anything that doth promise annoyance to the English and a skirmish to himself. Most likely he came near to us just in search of an opportunity such as he found." While they were speaking, Foster and his comrades presented themselves before their commander.

"So," enquired Heselrig, "what hath chanced?"

Foster related succinctly the occurrence—"The knaves who fled here in shameful panic say that William Wallace did head these outlaws."

"And they spoke truth," replied Foster, "for I heard him addressed by that name; but it scarcely required this confirmation, for no other would fight so fiercely and so recklessly. He himself, indeed, after the first charge, in which he unhorsed me—I shame not to say it—did rather hold off, regarding

his followers, and permitting them the greater share of the combat, as if, in so doing, he was acting kindly towards them."

"And he hath taken off this unhanged red ruffian, whom our lord's humanity hath turned loose upon us."

"Yea," said Foster, respectfully, "but he hath requited us five for two—the prisoner De Brito is also to be restored."

All this seemed to be gall and wormwood to Heselrig, who observed that Foster would expatiate on the courtesy and liberality of the outlaw, if he would only allow him. "And we are short of sustenance for our beef-devouring yeomen," said he: "but where to find it I am sure is beyond my understanding to discover. We must send to distant places immediately."

Folkham shook his head disconsolately as Foster left the apartment. "Nothing," said he, "hath thriven with us since a certain event took place in this castle."

"Dost thou mean the admission of the Leech, which thou hast been talking so much of lately?"

"Even so," replied the 'Squire; "I am no friend to priestcraft; but, certes, there is a difference between disliking lazy, fat monks, and dealing outright with the enemy of mankind, as doth this Gilbert; for, as I told my lord before, there is no doubt of that being his real name."

"Thou art a superstitious fool," said Heselrig, testily; "canst thou not perceive the difference between the forms necessary to draw forth the virtues of plants, and the incantations of a magician?"

"An this man be not a magician," said Folkham, in a sort of rough whisper—for his voice always sank when he spoke of Galbraith—"there is no such thing in nature."

"Well! well! thou art incorrigible. Go to him now, and say I want him, or send some other person, as thou dost fear him so much."

Galbraith had made an impression on the garrison, the effect of which was exemplified in the behaviour of Folkham, who, unquestionably a brave man-at-arms, was now cowed by the very name of the Leech; and, if Heselrig had permitted, would have traced every adverse incident

clearly to his evil influence, if not the direct exercise of his magical powers. And, as a very Jonah, he would have counselled his dismissal, even if he did not intentionally injure them.

Galbraith came, with the same sullen, gloomy air which he ever wore; and, as Heselrig walked rapidly up and down the room, he stood watching him in moody silence, until the latter stopped and spoke. "How doth the potion work?" asked he.

"Even as I foretold and expected. The damsel is sinking under debility of body, and this sinking can only be arrested by the other powerful arcanum—"

"And the disease changed into debility of mind instead of body, thou wouldst say. All that I knew before; but how doth it affect her particularly?"

"She doth simply feel weakness, without much bodily derangement, and doth repose mostly in bed."

"She doth suspect nothing?"

"It is scarcely possible she could, for she hath ever found benefit from my medicines, and hath perfect confidence in me, which—"

"Which, thou wouldst say, in consequence of a powerful consideration, thou hast abused. I know all that; therefore think not to enhance thy services, and increase thy reward, by compunction: I know thee too well, Black Gilbert."

He seemed to take pleasure in giving him this appellation, because the Leech appeared to wince under it; and it therefore assisted him in maintaining his power over the latter, who occasionally treated him with but little respect.

"The lady's maiden, simple though she be, doth not look so pleased, for she will aver that the damsel hath been ill since she took the cup I gave her, and doth look very sorrowful; albeit before her lady she doth smile to cheer her."

"It is a simple fool," said Heselrig; "why prate of her? Tell me, man, dost feel sure of success?" continued he, impatiently. "Shall this proud beauty be at my mercy? Shall her outlaw lover be baffled, scorned, and laughed at?"

"Is it necessary that I should repeat what I have told so often? Pass now some forty hours, and, if the counteracting talisman is not used, she is as a clod of the earth."

"Vengeance is sure, then, in one form or other," muttered Heselrig to himself. It was strange that he took so much delight in causing the Leech to repeat, at different times, what he had said before on this subject. It was probably some such idea that occurred to the latter, when he enquired on this occasion what he would have done without his assistance.

"Dost thou ask me, Black Gilbert," answered he, "and thou knowest I desire to be avenged. If a Scottish foeman had injured me, would I hesitate to destroy him? If there is a treasure which he doth desire to possess, and upon which my desires are also fixed, would I not destroy that treasure, rather than allow it to fall into his hands? Thou knowest I would. What then? If thou wert lacking, are there not the warrior's means—the strong arm, Gilbert?"

"Humph," said Gilbert; "I admit it was a foolish question. She is in thy power—the rest was easily imagined."

"Thou mayest say so, indeed; but it is more perfect vengeance as thou dost effect it."

"Doubtless, the unsuspicious nature of the damsel, and her innocence also, do make the acquisition more valuable; for in her present hallucinations she is ever walking in the greenwood with Wallace, and talking of him, and the scenes of former times which they shared together."

"Aye, indeed! and she will also think then of the ill-favoured Heselrig contrasted with the handsome outlaw," cried the other, with a truly demoniacal look. "And she will laugh to herself and her woman about the difference between the two men. I know them well, those women; and I know, too, how to treat them."

The Leech gazed with some surprise on the excitement manifested by the Knight, which probably seemed to him thrown away on such a frivolous object as woman's caprice or fancy; but Heselrig was vain, and he could not bear to be thought inferior to his rival in personal graces, although the fact was so glaring. "Innocent, sayest thou? Truly maidens are always so styled; and that same innocence is just what I resent in them, and therefore destroy. They deride plain

men, while they smile so sweetly on the beautiful of our sex; and therein doth their innocence offend, and call for vengeance. It is the quarrel of my sex with theirs that I take up against them," continued Heselrig. "And now, Black Gilbert, let me tell thee, thou hast got from me more of my inmost thoughts than any man now alive, and because I think thou art worthy to partake of my secrets."

"I am sensible of the great favour and the flattering distinction," replied the Leech, with a peculiar look.

"The favour is not much, perhaps, because if thou dost breathe a syllable of what I tell thee, the fosse will soon receive thy carcase. But it is my pleasure to tell thee such private opinions, and that is enough. I know thou darest not divulge them, for other reasons." He then withdrew, leaving Galbraith in a musing attitude, during which he seemed to be shaken by some inward emotion.

CHAPTER XIII.

A goodly preparation! bustle! bustle!
Caparison my horse!

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Castle of Ayr was now crowded with men drawn together from various quarters, with due consideration to the avoidance of alarm to their Scottish enemies. Some had come round by the Mull of Galloway from England, along with a plentiful supply of provisions, which kept the garrison in excellent health and spirits; and, although in ignorance of their ultimate object, they all saw that some important event was approaching, and they readily divined the nature of it. The Lord Governor continued his preparations in the same cautious and secret manner, until he was ripe

for an attack on the Outlaw Leaguer, and then he only waited for the last intelligence of his scouts, whose return was anxiously looked for. He was sitting in his cabinet, having no one in company but Sir Robert Senhouse, deeply engaged in his various schemes, when the arrival of the scouts we have already spoken of was intimated to him. They were ordered in, without a moment's delay, and he proceeded eagerly to question them.

They detailed their proceedings very circumstantially; and when they had finished, he enquired particularly about the countryman who had guided them to the camp of Wallace; and on receiving their reply, coldly expressed his belief that they had been imposed on by a follower of the outlaw.

"This cannot be true; he is known to be strong in able-bodied men," said he.

"It would seem, my Lord," replied one, "that they have suffered from sickness, for our informer said there had been many more weakly people about their leaguer than when they first came there."

"Sawest thou but one camp?"

"No more, my Lord, for we were assured they were all the same, saving that this was the best and largest."

"By Heaven! this is passing strange. If it be so, we have been fooled by your former intelligence, derived also from country people. What sayest thou, Senhouse?"

"It is somewhat hard to believe, unquestionably; 'tis pity they brought not some proof beyond their own authority," replied Sir Robert; "but that would be difficult to obtain."

"We have, so please you, ample confirmation of our intelligence, in the person of the man who gave it to us, whom we have brought, knowing that my Lord doth sometimes distrust us. This man may be questioned to the satisfaction of every one."

He withdrew, and soon returned with a very simple-looking country lad, clad in the homeliest apparel of his class. "What is thy name?" enquired the Lord Governor.

"Colin Herd," was the reply.

"Which doth mean, thy name is Colin, and thy occupation that of a herdsman." The man stared as if he did not understand what was said; but the chief spy intimated that he was known only as Colin, and had no sirname, as his lord had surmised, but took the distinguishing epithet from his calling. Whilst he was speaking, Colin continued to stare around him, as if amazed at every thing he saw; but when Lord Piercy put the next question, he answered readily, "Hast thou seen the outlaw Wallace?"

"Often."

"What is he like?"

"Like no one here," answered Colin, gazing round as if searching for some resemblance, "he is a big strong man, and wonderfully deliver."

"Clever, that means, my Lord," said Senhouse.

"Old or young?"

"Young, young; he hath but a short beard."

"Hath he many men with him?"

"A great many fierce men, but some of them are not well in health. When the outlaws came first, the men were bigger and stronger like. May be they are not so well fed."

be expeditious also. Let me see! We shall despatch one this night to Wallace, with the announcement of our intention not to grant a truce—almost unnecessary, I believe, yet still in fulfilment of the agreement entered into — messengers, trusty and well guarded, instantly to Glasgow and Lanark, with instructions to the commanders there to be at a certain point, each near to this principal leaguer, while we approach from our side to another point, so that the felons shall be in a trap by daybreak to-morrow morning, ha! Sir Robert? 'Tis now noon only, so we have time enough for all our arrangements; and let them be made without the slightest bustle, or any word to the men, saving that they are to march by four of the clock afternoon, so as to be on the ground soon enough to rest a few hours before the time of action. The precise spots shall be marked out for the Glasgow and Lanark men, and some who know the ground shall be sent to each division."

They sat long in deliberation, while Piercy with his own hand, a rare accomplishment even for a

nobleman then, wrote out his instructions for the leader of the division which way to approach from Glasgow, and for Heselrig with his Lanark men. He then gave directions for getting ready all the horses which could be procured at a short notice, in order that his archers and spearmen might be conveyed by these means, so that they should be as little fatigued as possible, on arriving at their destination. Those who could not get horses, he directed to be mounted behind the men-at-arms who had the strongest steeds; and in this manner he calculated his portion (the principal one) of the Southron army would reach the ground before midnight, without in the least tiring either horses or riders, and they would have then (the autumn was now advancing) six hours for repose.

The spies, no less delighted with their lord's bounty than the countryman, took the latter, nothing loth, to the quarters of the yeomen, where they were all amply refreshed; and Colin seemed so well pleased, that he manifested no inclination to return to his simpler fare and rustic abode.

"Why, Colin," said one of them, "thou art a

gay happy fellow for a clodhopper. Why dost not take service with the Knight of Lanark, thy neighbour? Thou art free?"

"Aye, but I like not this skin cutting. See'st thou, friend, that knight thou dost speak of doth care little for a man's head or his breath. He will take off one, or stop the other, on small occacasion. Mass! I like to keep both."

"Art thou a coward?"

"May be so; what then? God made us all. Can I help it?"

"Did'st never fight?" asked another contemptuously.

"Oh-aye, my head hath been twice broken with staves."

Here the chief of the intelligence department entered, and whispered to his mates.

"Something toward," said he; "be ready in a moment to travel back. I see men-at-arms looking to their gear, too."

Colin's ears were open to the lightest articulate sound, and he drank in every word, which satisfied him that his information had brought the Southron

Chief to a speedy determination, and the result would be an attack on the leaguer very soon. He did not expect to learn more, so, after walking about a little, he lounged carelessly out of the gate, and was soon on the high way to Lanark woods.

He reached his destination before nightfall, and found Wallace with all his chieftains around him. His news were such as they expected and had been preparing for. Two trusty persons were dispatched immediately to Bothwell and Douglas to intimate that it was time for them to commence their march as had been arranged, so that the men might be rested and refreshed before the dawn of next day. Those who had taken part covertly with the patriots had been for two days past gradually drawing together from different quarters to this central point, and among them were some of his kindred Crawfords, whose chief still remained in the same unpleasant position with regard to the Lord Governor, which was different from that of other influential persons, inasmuch as their connection with him afforded confirmation of what only amounted to suspicion in the cases of others. But

the energies of the Lord Governor being concentrated on this one plan of overwhelming Wallace by surprise, he attended less to individual cases in the meantime, and perhaps expected that his success in this grand enterprise would crush in the bud all insubordination which was now either meditated or secretly indulged.

In so far as matters had gone, it was evident that his youthful antagonist had foiled him at his own weapons, and had not only contrived to get information of all his movements, but to keep him in darkness with regard to his own, and the intelligence which led to them. The messenger dispatched to Heselrig reached him at night, and when he did not expect such an order. Not that he was unprepared in a military point of view—his instructions previously received having induced him to keep everything in readiness to obey the orders of his lord—but the case was different in his domestic concerns. He had thought more than he himself seemed to be aware of his fair captive, and it is certain that he would not have allowed Galbraith to administer the baneful

draught, if he had calculated on the probability of the exhibition of the second being intrusted to the care of the Leech alone, which he felt assured must now be the case.

He had the worst opinion of the latter, and fully believed that he was capable of any atrocity; but this in itself would not have troubled him, had he not suspected, from certain signs he had lately perceived, that he would have a malicious pleasure in thwarting him, and thus might allow Marion to die under the operation of her first dose. He regarded Gilbert as one who delighted in human suffering and disappointment, and was convinced that he was afraid of no person on earth.

Indeed, he had impressed him with some degree of mysterious awe, as well as his superstitious follower; but the time for action had arrived. It was now midnight, and in two hours he must issue from the Castle, in accordance with the commands he had just received. His principal officers were summoned around him immediately, and the necessary announcement made to them, and at the same time orders given that no person should be allowed to go forth from the gates until the march

began. Folkham was directed to bring Galbraith forthwith, that he might converse with him on the subject that occupied him as much as the important public affair he was engaged in; but the Leech had gone out, on one of his frequent excursions in search of rare plants, and had been seen by no person since sunset. There was nothing uncommon in this, for it was a frequent practice with him, yet Heselrig caused every corner to be searched, so anxious was he to have him before him ere he set out.

By the noon of next day the time would expire when it was necessary to give the second powerful medicine that was to save her life and to destroy her intellect; and if it was allowed to pass, nothing earthly could preserve her in existence. Heselrig's reflections were of a conflicting nature. He felt that, in any event, he would succeed in defrauding Wallace of his bride; but he was by no means so sure now, how far he could satisfy Lord Piercy as to the cause of Marion's sudden demise, or be successful in keeping him to the strict letter of his promise, "that he was sure of her land at any rate."

The hum that gradually increased, of men arming and getting ready, insensibly inspired him with his wonted energy before a battle, and he thought that things must be left to chance and to the Leech. "And if I play my part well in this melée (he said to himself), I know from past experience my explanations shall be readily received."

The spot which Wallace now occupied was selected as affording the best ground he could find for a combat, which it was his desire should be fought on foot. The forest where his former encampments were situated was open, so that horsemen might use their steeds with advantage, and he knew that his enemies relied on that circumstance; but the locality he had now chosen was a thickly wooded rising ground, with steep sides on the north and the south, and sloping gently to the east and west. He had a number of large trees felled, which were laid judiciously across the ascent on the two former aspects of his position, so as completely to intercept the advance of cavalry, and almost to obstruct entirely that of infantry. And in the

centre or summit of the rising ground or small hill, as it might be termed, he had erected a fortification of the same material, wide and high enough to keep at bay any force that might come against it, unless the latter had time to demolish it, which would be a task of some difficulty, the trees being of the largest size, and piled in sundry rows with great labour one above the other, and pinned together with bolts so as to form a solid mass of great height and thickness. This enclosure was sufficient to contain his entire band.

To the east and west the ground was more thinly covered with wood, and horsemen could penetrate from those two quarters to the very gates of the camp; but they could not charge with any degree of freedom. And the object of Wallace being to court an engagement under disadvantageous circumstances to the enemy, he and his leaders thought it was more advisable to leave those two approaches as they were. In front of these barricades on those two sides, and close to the gates, which were placed one on each quarter, a space was left which he meant to occupy with

his schiltrons, and where they were to meet the attack of the men-at-arms, if they persisted in keeping their steeds, under the circumstances of diminished room to wheel them in, and no ground for their career, when they charged.

He was averse to confining his men within their fortifications, but he wished to have them as a defence, in event of the enemy proving too strong, and forcing them to retreat. The ever greatest difficulty he had to deal with, was the formidable archery of the Southron, and to Douglas was specially committed the task of watching, and assailing them as he best could, on the east side. His own bowmen, under Angus, were to remain within the barricades, and to shoot from behind them. As he expected to be attacked both from the east and west, he divided his spearmen into two large schiltrons, one being stationed at each of these quarters—that on the east, under Douglas and Bothwell, with a number of inferior leaders—and on the west he took the command in person. Cormack arrived late at night, fiery red with haste; and after his customary consultation, to the sur-

prise of all, again departed, although it was known his master reckoned much on having him near his person on such occasions; but in the excitement and anticipation of the moment, he was soon forgotten.

Meanwhile, it was not to be supposed that the Lady Marion and her faithful attendant should be altogether unconscious of the bustle which arose during the stillness of that night in the Castle of Lanark. But it can only be surmised, that in the disordered state of her frame, she might be less sensible to what was passing around her than Dora, who, during the whole of this night, betrayed the utmost anxiety and restlessness, frequently uttering exclamations, and casting her eyes on her Lady. At length the suppressed hum was silenced entirely. The array of Heselrig had departed, leaving the smallest possible number to guard the Castle.

Dora's uneasiness seemed to increase as the morning advanced; and leaving her Lady in a tranquil sleep, probably induced by previous excitement and consequent exhaustion, she stole gently,

for the first time since her imprisonment, down the stairs, and out into the inner court, without meeting any person. The first streaks of day were just appearing, as she crossed timidly to the outer court, where, listening for a moment, she heard like voices in conversation near the gate —some stranger speaking to a warder, doubtless— so it seemed to her, and affected her strangely; probably she fancied Heselrig was returning, for she turned and ran like a deer, never stopping till she reached their own apartments, where she burst into tears immediately.

CHAPTER XIV.

Now, Esperanza! Piercy! and set on!
Sound all the lofty instruments of war!

Henry IV.

O heaven! when swords for freedom shine,
And monarchs right, the cause is thine!
Edge doubly every patriot blow,
Beat down the banners of the foe;
And be it to the nations shewn,
That victory is from God alone!

Lord of the Isles.

It was a set of strangers who then sought admittance at the gates, even countrymen, as one told the warder, with a supply of corn, brought from a distance, for which, as he said, he expected a good price, knowing how difficult they found it to get the necessary quantity.

"Doubt it not," said the warder; "but thou must wait a short space ere I can open the gates. Hast many waggons?"

" Ten large ones, and choke full," replied the countryman; " and thou mayest see I have taken care of it, for every load is well covered."

" Thou art a good fellow," said the warder; " and doubtless 'Squire Folkham, who hath command now within the walls, will give thee both pay and reward; but thou hast come very early."

" I cannot help it. I have a long road before me; so thou must e'en, for the good turn I have done ye all, open and let me in."

The warder hesitated, and said that it wanted nearly a half hour to the usual time; " but," continued he, looking at the brightening east, " after all I may be wrong; it is getting fast into day." And he gave orders for opening the gates, and lowering the drawbridge; which being effected, the wains passed slowly into the outer court, each having a man in charge of the horse that drew it. The last stopped just under the archway of the gate, some of the harness having given way, as the driver said.

" Plague on thy rotten leather," cried the impatient warder. " Haste ye, for I must close the gate."

" Be not so hasty," said the man, going very leisurely about the horses.

Just then the warder descried people approaching rapidly towards the gates.

" What be they ?" said he to himself, in alarm. Then, " Arm ! arm !" he cried, in the very loudest key of his voice. " The foe is at hand."

He blew his horn vehemently, and every trumpet in the place soon sounded also the alarm; but it was responded to in a manner they little expected; for the coverings of the wains were suddenly and simultaneously lifted up, and half a dozen well armed men started out from each, who jumped to the ground, crying their slogan of " Wallace! Wallace ! and liberty !"

The garrison, called out suddenly, was in great confusion; nevertheless, Folkham drew up and encouraged them by word and deed to a brave resistance, and the combat was maintained for some time, even after the band had entered at the gate, which first excited suspicion. The morning by this time had so far advanced that objects were distinctly perceived, and the Southrons observed with dismay

that the outlaws far outnumbered them. Their leader, who wore the armour, without the spurs of a knight, was especially active and daring in the fight.

"Yield thee, Folkham," cried he, "resistance is vain."

"To whom?" asked the latter.

"To the patriot bands of William Wallace," exclaimed the stranger.

"Never," cried Folkham.

"Die then, fool!" cried the other, attacking him so fiercely that at the first onset Folkham was thrown down, either slain or severely wounded; his men, panic stricken, wavered, then fled; and in a few minutes more, the shouts of the Scots rose high, spreading the joyful news of their success, even to the burghers of Lanark.

The Southrons had scarcely recovered from the astonishment to which the suddenness of the onslaught gave rise, when they found themselves vanquished, and hurried rapidly into the dungeons of the Castle, and other places where they could be secured, leaving some slain and more wounded.

"And now," cried the leader already mentioned, "get every horse saddled that is to be found, for we have not a moment's time—the lot is thine, Stephen, thou knowest to command here—let me recommend an outlook towards the forest, and if the day doth go against us, be thou off with all that is worth taking, for thou canst stand no siege. Yet be not rash. Where is the Leech Galbraith?"

"He hath left the castle since yesterday, and cannot be found."

"But there is another, get him to look to those poor fellows on the ground." So saying, the horses being produced, to the number of forty or fifty, he, with as many followers, departed at full speed in the direction of Wallace's leaguer.

The day thus auspiciously commenced at Lanark had began with a far more earnest and long contested struggle in the forest. The Lord Piercy set out at the hour appointed in the direction of Glasgow, with an army of three thousand men fully armed and accoutred, and all mounted. The larger portion consisted of men-at-arms, who, in addition to their lances, had battle-axes at the

the saddle bow, and swords at their sides. Their horses were also barbed, especially thosewho were bestridden by knights, of whom there were several in the household of the Lord Governor. That Chief himself was remarkable for the splendour of his equipments, and his richly adorned armour; and he rode with a stately and confident air, at the head of his array, like one who was bound on a gay journey, or who looked forward to an assured triumph. Proudly his noble war-horse pranced under him, as, to the trumpet's sound, he issued forth and proceeded down the High Street of Ayr and across the bridge, amidst the wondering gaze of the burghers. They kept the Glasgow road only as far as Riccarton, when they struck off to the east in the direction of Strathaven, and pursued the way to their destination, which was a part of the forest some miles north-east of Lanark. The usual precautions of an advanced and a rear-guard were observed, and the latter had instructions to detain every man whom they encountered, and to seize all that seemed to watch them. Nothing occurred during the march, and they took up

their quarters on ground previously marked out for them before midnight, and under the light of a brilliant moon. Their bivouac being soon arranged they enjoyed such repose, for a few hours, as men fatigued somewhat, but excited more, could take; and having refreshed themselves just as the first reddening of the east appeared, they again set out under the direction of their spies for the outlaw encampment. Piercy had taken care to despatch, during the night, at regular intervals, messengers to the commanders of the other divisions of his force, intimating the exact locality he was in; and as they did the same, there was a perfect knowledge kept up of the progress each band made in its march. In about an hour, they reached the skirt of the forest nearest to the place of their destination, and every thing remained still and quiet, as if no outlaw was near. Proceeding cautiously on, they soon came in sight of the range of houses which were shewn to the spy as the principal camp, and here they halted at the distance of a quarter of a mile. The men kept the strictest silence, but no human form was visible. The wood was here thin, there being scarcely any brushwood, and there was no

difficulty in going through it on horseback. They had not waited many minutes when the accuracy of Piercy's calculations and the correctness of the intelligence became apparent, for the band from Glasgow, and that from Lanark, slowly and cautiously made their appearance ; the former from the north and the latter from the south, Piercy's having come from the west. His object was to cut off the retreat of the outlaws in event of their taking alarm. Both these bands halted, and the Lord Governor advanced towards the houses, which he found empty. The Chiefs of the whole army being called together, a council was held on the circumstances. Heselrig intimated that, in his opinion, the rebels were not far off, and prepared for them, for it was almost impossible to keep intelligence from such men of what was going on. Piercy was disappointed by what he saw, because it again induced him to suspect that his spies had been mystified and befooled, but he would not acknowledge it ; "and if they are so," said he, "we are no less prepared ; we came not here to take captives alone, but ready to fight a stout band of outlaws."

"Truly we are so, my Lord," said Multon, the leader of the Glasgow band, with a smile, and glancing round, "I cannot imagine that any force the rebels could muster will stand before us half-an-hour."

"Thou art wrong also, De Multon," replied Piercy sharply; "see that thou dost come off the field with as much honour as thou dost expect; but marvel not if thou findest hard work before thee."

De Multon bowed low to the reproof, and declared that he merely desired to express approbation of the strong measures taken by his Lordship, which, he hoped, could not fail to bring on a happy termination.

"Cease we this idle talking," said Piercy, "and send out men to discover where these vagrants are to be found. I trust in Heaven they have not departed!"

The whole army then rested on their arms, while parties proceeded to search the forest in all directions for traces of the enemy; and it was not long ere Lord Piercy was relieved of his apprehensions regarding the escape of the rebels.

The position of Wallace was discovered, amid the deepest silence it was possible to preserve, among so many men assembled in one place; but there was no person visible around it, nor did any sound escape from it. Still the fact was apparent, and it was agreed to advance on it. The Lord Governor directed his two lieutenants, Heselrig and De Multon, to make a detour, one to the north and the other to the south, so as to attack in flank and rear, whilst he assailed the front on the western side. As Piercy approached, the trees became thicker, and the impediment greater, to the passage of his numerous host; and he halted for an instant, to allow his yeomen to dismount, leaving their horses under the charge of some followers; and as he came nearer to the fortification, the difficulties increased. Still, in hopes of finding the ground more open, he pushed on till full in sight of the outlaw leaguer, which, to his experienced eyes, revealed at once the subtlety of his adversary, and the probable number of his adherents. Seen from the declivity of the gently sloping eminence, the walls seemed of height to defy escalade; and the

extent he could form a tolerable notion of, from the length of the front. Whilst he was gazing on it, the rude gate opened, and, still in silence, the men of Wallace issued regularly forth, and rapidly formed themselves into a schiltron.

"Forward!" cried Piercy. "Upon them! 'Speranza! 'Speranza!"

The battle word, in those times so famous, rang far and wide, raised by thousands of voices, through the deep solitude of that forest. The silence, a moment before so profound, gave place to noises, that seemed to fill every tree, while the host of England pushed on, until, reaching the cleared space, they were within a few paces of their enemy. Then rose a deep hoarse shout from the Scots, accompanied by their usual slogan of "Wallace! Wallace! and liberty!" The shock of the large body of men-at-arms was severe, notwithstanding the impediment to their career; but it was withstood firmly. Wallace placed himself near the front of the schiltron, so that he might, in the event of the latter being disordered, be at hand to reform it immediately. There being no room to take

ground for a charge, the battle was continued for some time, by the men-at-arms urging their horses against the long spears of the Scots.

But Wallace, who towered above all his men, and commanded a view of every part of the field, soon observed, that while very few of his own followers lay on the ground, the latter was strewed with men and horses in front of them; and, in a voice like the clang of a trumpet, heard distinctly above the multitudinous sounds of fight, he announced it to the whole band. Thus every circumstance that was favourable he turned to advantage in another way. Piercy observed him, as he paused for a moment in the struggle. He did not ask who it was, for he felt that to be unnecessary; but he called a bowman to his side.

"Seest thou yonder chief, the tallest of them all? Draw thine arrow to the head, and if it speeds, a hundred nobles shall be thine."

The archer obeyed; but ere he could adjust a shaft to the string, he was observed by the men of Angus, who had been keeping up a constant discharge from the ramparts, and a dozen arrows

flew at him and his lord. They rattled off the armour of the latter, without doing any damage; but the yeoman was struck to the heart; and Piercy again plunged into the thickest of the melée. After continuing the assault in this manner for a short time longer, he perceived that he was under disadvantage, and called off his men. Well aware, from what he saw, that there was little chance of the Scots following him, he coolly drew off from the schiltron into the wood. Then did both parties perceive how the affair had terminated.

There were only two or three of the Scots lying slain—their wounded had been taken within the schiltron; but a considerable number of Southrons lay there, and as many horses. The eyes of the English were turned from the covert to the terrible warrior, who had been the soul of his band, and who now talked energetically to them, while his spear, the butt resting on the ground, stood upright beside him, dyed for a yard from the point in blood. During this lull in the west, the shouts and other cries of fighting men were dis-

tinctly heard from the eastern side of the camp. Wallace kept the communication open between him and his friends there, and was aware that the two divisions, unable to force a passage in the south and north, had passed round and met on the east, where they jointly attacked Douglas and Bothwell, with nearly the same result as that experienced by the main body.

" Archers," cried Piercy, " this battle is yours. Stand forth and ply them close with shaft on shaft; each must bear a man's life on its point. Quit not the covert, and ye are on a footing with the bowmen on the walls."

Then stepped forth the dreaded archery of England before the men-at-arms, still keeping behind the trees that skirted the scene of combat, and began to shower their cloth-yard flanes on the dense body of Scots, who must soon be cut down entirely if it continued. Meanwhile Piercy ordered his men-at-arms to dismount, intending to make the next attack on foot, and, keeping his eye on the Scots, he observed them to reel under the continued discharge of his five hundred bow-

men; while the latter, protected by the wood, suffered little from that of the Cumnock archers on the walls. The commotion seemed to increase in the schiltron, and Piercy encouraged his yeomanry to keep an incessant shower on it.

But he soon found that something of a different sort was going on; for Wallace, perceiving that nothing could be done to quell effectually these fatal marksmen, gradually drew off his men within the fortification; and while Piercy gazed on them, the mere outer ranks, which alone remained, with a quicker step withdrew, and instantly closed the gate. The archers, although within less than a hundred paces, did not detect the manœuvre until it was nearly accomplished; but they rushed forward with a shout of triumph, expecting to find a dismayed foe. Angus's party, however, redoubled its exertions, and soon drove them back to the wood. On the eastern side, also, the Southrons seemed to have the advantage, and by means of the same fatal weapon; but Douglas, whose attention had been particularly drawn to that portion of the opposite force, was determined that he should make an

attempt, at least, to quell them. He selected, therefore, about fifty well-armed and active young men of his own household, a number he thought sufficient, for the archers of this division did not amount to half the number of those belonging to the other; and quitting the schiltron, just where it touched on the wood, he got behind the enemy unperceived, and coming upon them suddenly and unexpectedly, made great havoc, for they were lightly armed, and his followers cased in mail. They fled hastily towards their main body, then closely engaged with the schiltron, and their alarm created much confusion, for it was at first believed that another body of Scots had attacked them; but they soon recovered from it. The archers, however, were completely discomfited, and rendered unavailable. Heselrig made desperate attempts to break the firm array of his enemies. He pushed his well barbed charger repeatedly against the kneeling ranks of the schiltron, and every time killed or wounded a man, but the loss was instantly supplied by one behind. At last, in one charge he broke his spear, and at the same

time a vulnerable spot was found in his steed, which fell under him. In an instant Heselrig sprang to his feet, and, snatching the battle-axe from his saddle-bow, defended himself until he was succoured by his own followers. He found, like Lord Piercy, that the loss in horses would, in this sort of fighting, be more than commensurate with the benefit derived from them, and in concert with De Multon, determined to make the next assault on foot. They were cheered by the news of Lord Piercy's success, and expected soon to drive the whole of the Scots into their stronghold. But Wallace was now about to put in practice one of those artifices which he had contrived, in anticipation of a conjuncture like the present. It has been already said that the sides of his fortification, on the north and south, were impassable to horsemen and nearly so to footmen; and as this almost impenetrable denseness extended so as to join the walls, the east and west ends were nearly separated from each other. Wallace having taken a survey from the top of the wall, perceived that Piercy was preparing ladders, which his yeomen

constructed rudely of the materials at hand, and he could not doubt the object; so, after a few words with Angus, he descended into the area, and, appointing a certain number under Kersland and Auchinleck to defend with Angus the fortifications from the assault of Piercy, he prepared to sally forth through the eastern gate.

The schiltron under Douglas and Bothwell being drawn up just before the latter, the larger band of Wallace defiled gradually behind it, entering the wood unperceived by the Southrons. The commanders of the latter raised again their cry of "Esperanza!" "Esperanza!" and once more, but on foot attacked their foes, spear to spear, and foot to foot; and it was doubtful how far they might have succeeded under such a leader as Heselrig, who was esteemed as a warrior as much as he was disliked as a man. He encountered Sir Andrew Murray, and, in the combat which ensued, the latter was disarmed and wounded, but saved from being taken by the attack on the Southron rear just then made by Wallace, amidst loud acclamations of his name. The English were nearly

panic stricken by this unexpected assault, but Heselrig and De Multon, with great activity and resolution, reassured them, and the battle raged with much fierceness.

Piercy, having no communications from his commanders on the other side, to the contrary, believed that the Scots, finding themselves too weak to maintain their footing on the open ground, were determined to defend themselves within their walls, and resolved that no time should be lost in storming the stronghold. It was not difficult in such a place to construct as many ladders as were required, the height not being so great, as it at first appeared to him, and the rudest mechanism being sufficient. He was soon, therefore, in a condition to make the assault; and commanding his bowmen to keep down everything that appeared within or above the rampart, the latter took their station within the clear space, just on the verge of the forest, and spread themselves so as to command the whole front wall. In doing so, they exposed themselves to the Scottish archers, who shot through loopholes and over the walls, platforms

being erected for standing at every available place. The Southron bowmen took advantage of each chance afforded by a man appearing in sight, and discharged their arrows with great quickness.

The men, meanwhile, advanced with their ladders, and a party, consisting of as many yeomen as could get round a tree which had been cut for the purpose, proceeded to batter the gates, of whose strength the Lord Governor had doubts. As the first ladder was planted, a figure that seemed wild looking to them rose up from behind the wall, and regarded the proceedings beneath with great tranquillity; it was a form of much strength, and seemed to be covered with hair. "Ha! art thou there?" said Piercy, as he beheld him. "Well! thou didst not deceive me, for thou didst say thou wouldst resist to the last; but thou canst hardly escape now!" These words were uttered almost involuntarily as he looked from Angus to the archers, who were bending their bows on him.

The latter had the large shield which he bore on a former occasion, with a hooded hawk dis-

played on it, and under its cover he stepped from the platform on which he first appeared up to the wall itself—the arrows rattling off this trusty defence—and regarding attentively those who were crowding on to the ladder beneath. Just when the foremost man was within two yards of him, he pushed it from the wall, with its load of armed men, who were bruised and crushed by the fall, so as to be unfit for another attempt.

The other leaders, lacking his great strength, were contented with preventing these facilities of ascent from obtaining a footing. Nevertheless, encouraged by their lord and his principal followers, the Southrons persevered, and attempted in many places to scramble up, without the help of ladders. In this manner, the attention of the Scots being so much divided, and the shooting of the English archers so close and severe, some daring men-at-arms got a footing on the walls, near the position of Angus, and attacked him and his followers, where they stood. He wielded a mace that day, and with such effect, that Piercy observed with surprise, whenever he aimed a blow,

a man tumbled to the ground. It was not long, therefore, ere the assailing party near him was dislodged; elsewhere they met with as little permanent success. The archers of the Southrons were suffering from constant exposure to the aim of the Scots, who found their arrows more effectual when so directed than against the men-at-arms. The thundering of the temporary battering-ram resounded over the din of battle, as they plied it ineffectually against the gate; and, as the heat of the combatants increased, the slogans of each were repeated more frequently and energetically, so that the parties engaged on the other side were made fully aware of the struggle that was going on.

We must now return to that quarter. Heselrig perceived at a glance that nothing but uncommon exertion could sustain his party. He sent a messenger immediately to Lord Piercy, but he was seen and intercepted by the keen observation of Wallace, who, thinking such might be despatched, had issued an order to let none escape who separated from the Southrons. Heselrig animated his men by voice as well as example; and though

rather outnumbered by the Scots, they had the advantage of being better furnished with armour; and much depended on the prowess of the leaders, as in all other engagements of the time. Heselrig turned to the fresh assailants furiously; and such was his strength as well as courage, that they gave way from his immediate path, while he struck down several; and his own followers shouted exultingly as they crowded on behind him, using his name as the battle-cry, instead of the word of Piercy. Wallace, who was at a little distance, felt his soul burn within him, as he heard a name thus triumphantly called out, which had been to him the source of so much grief and bitterness, and dashing aside the intervening Southrons with a few sweeps of his tremendous sword, which he now used, he presented himself, his face uncovered, as it always was in fight, before the eyes of Heselrig. The latter glared on him for a moment, while the men drew back on each side from two such champions, leaving, as if by tacit consent, the task of fighting for an instant to them alone. "We have met, Heselrig," said Wallace, "and

we shall not both part alive." The deadly hatred of Heselrig almost shone through the bars of his vizor, in the glare of his eyes.

"Thou hast crossed my path, base rebel, but thou shalt do so no more: thine hour is come!

"Thine is indeed," said Wallace, in a stern tone, while his aspect gleamed terribly. "Thou foul tyrant, thy doom is near!" They were too excited for more words, and the combat commenced immediately, Heselrig throwing away the battle-axe, and drawing his sword. It was but brief. Notwithstanding the great courage and prowess of Heselrig, he was inferior to his antagonist; yet it was furious while it lasted.

Heselrig fell; and the Scots, who had forgotten the Southrons in the engrossing interest of this single fight, raised a shout which told a great deal more than triumph over a foe. It was the shout of vengeance over a cruel oppressor who had fallen. The Southrons, who had also paused in breathless interest to view the combat, were now depressed and dispirited, while their adversaries were, in a corresponding degree, elated. The latter pressed

on now as to an assured victory, and the English did not maintain their ground much longer, but began to steal off through the wood, to join their comrades on the other side.

Meanwhile, the Lord Piercy became anxious to know what was passing to the eastward; but although he dispatched several messengers, none returned. He had failed to open the gates; and although he had several times got a footing on the walls, it was only for a brief space. He became exceedingly anxious, and urged on his men, both by his voice and his example, to extraordinary attempts. As the Scots who defended the fortifications were far inferior in number, he might have succeeded in forcing an entrance, and perhaps turning the tide of battle, but for an incident that now occurred, to explain which we must go back to the leader of the party which seized on Lanark Castle. He and his followers entered the town of Lanark, after quitting the Castle, and on telling the burghers of his success, he prevailed on a number to join him, the rather that they had all along been friendly to

Wallace. With these he pursued his way to the scene of action, which he reached just as Piercy was redoubling his attempts to storm the camp. As his band approached, they came to the horses of the Southron, which had been removed to a little distance, excepting those of Piercy and his immediate attendants, which were kept at hand in case of necessity. The sharp wits of the leader, in whose ears the noise of battle was ringing, easily divined that the Southrons had tried the combat on foot, and a plan suggested itself for making his surprise more effectual. There was, as he knew, a barrel of tar, in the deserted houses, which had been used for various purposes. He sent some of his followers for it, and while they were absent, he directed the rest to seize the few men who were in charge of the horses, and who did not amount to more than a score, the others having fastened most of the animals to trees, and gone to peep from behind the foliage at the fighting. A fire was then kindled, and when the tar arrived, he caused the manes and tails of thirty or forty of the horses to be smeared with it. This done, they advanced cautiously, the

other horses having been previously let loose, and the fire being carried on boughs laid transversely and covered with leaves, until they came near enough for their purpose. They then set fire to the tarred manes and tails, and turning the heads of the animals to the forest, set them off mad with fright, at full speed, heedless of opposing trees, against which they dashed, making a dreadful noise, fearfully increased by the other horses, which, catching the fears of their fellows, fled with them in the same impetuous manner.

The contrivers of this ruse had no sooner set them off than they raised a cry of "Wallace! Wallace! Liberty!" and charged through the trees full upon the astonished Southrons, who believed from the noise that an immense force was upon them. They were panic stricken and astounded. Many of them threw down their arms, and ran off in the only direction which seemed to afford a chance of escape, which was down the steep declivities on each side, where the foresight of Wallace had planted many impediments, but, under the influence of terror, they surmounted them.

But although all the yeomen, and many of the men-at-arms, sought safety in this manner, the nobler hearts of the English rallied near their Chief, who eagerly called them round him, pointing out the small number of the Scots, and explaining in few words the cause of the crashing among the trees, which he easily perceived.

Without hesitation, the Scots impetuously attacked this force, which outnumbered them in the proportion of ten to one; but there was no compact series of spears such as the schiltron constituted, and they made some impression, many of the Southrons being borne to the ground by their lances; but when the first shock was over, they found they were in a most perilous position. They were environed by their foes; and it was evident that nothing, save fighting their way out, could accomplish their safety. To do this, they fought desperately; but Piercy seeing the fate of the battle hung on the work of a moment, outdid his former deeds on this occasion; and his followers, encouraged by his example, fully emulated him. Many of the Scots were struck or pulled down

from their horses, and their leader was engaged with several combatants, who seemed specially desirous of getting him out of the way, when all at once the gate opened, and the cry of "Wallace" resounded from the inside.

Presently that dreaded warrior rushed through, followed by those who were that day immediately under his command; the rest, with Douglas and Bothwell, having followed the flying Southrons. This charge decided finally the day. The leader of the party which had surprised them repeated with increased energy the war-cry of "Wallace," and dealt a blow which laid on the ground a knight, who had for some time attacked him. The men under Wallace were now around him, and he alighted to follow up his advantage.

"Dost thou render thyself, Sir Knight, rescue or no rescue?"

"I must, since I cannot help it. My name is Robert Senhouse."

"A noble captive! Be pleased to withdraw within the fortification," said the leader, courteously; "I will not mention a lowly name to thee

as thy captor. Consider thyself the prisoner of Wallace."

So saying, he again mingled in the fight.

"Whoe'er thou art," said Senhouse, as he slowly rose, "thy valour is only equalled by thy courtesy;" and he proceeded to obey the orders he had received.

Rendered desperate by the circumstances in which he was placed, and maddened by the thought which would, even in that awful moment, obtrude itself of King Edward's resentment, Lord Piercy threw himself recklessly on the Scots, as if he courted death, until he was gradually forced off the field and mounted on his own horse, while his army was flying wildly around him. Angus and his Cumnock men, fresher than the rest of their countrymen, poured out like a torrent on the scattered enemy, and followed them far into the surrounding country. The route was complete, and the heart of Wallace, with that of every man in his bands, leaped joyfully, as they also hurried on the chase, taking all who rendered on the usual conditions, and cutting down every one who resisted.

The day was far advanced ere the pursuit was discontinued, and Wallace blew his horn to call back the wearied men. They came in, one party after another, shouting joyfully, and every man as he approached his chief, saluted him kindly and congratulated him; while he shook every one by the hand whom he could get near. It was wonderful how few were missing of the meaner sort, and he had not to mourn the loss of a single chief.

"Now laud we the God of battles!" cried he solemnly and aloud, "who hath so signally shewn the justice of our cause."

"Amen!" was responded in the same strain by all who heard. "Next to you, my noble Chiefs, and to you all, my gallant men, are the thanks of your leader, bankrupt in aught else, specially due."

"To thee, to thee, alone belongs the glory of the fight!" cried a hundred voices simultaneously. And this probably suggested to Douglas, in the enthusiasm of the moment, what he said immediately afterwards.

"My brave friends!" cried he, and he mounted a ladder which was against the wall, as he spoke.

"Ye have all said true. The merit of the victory is with our glorious Chief, such another lives not within the earth's bounds! Shall we not then give him his due, by formal installation? I call upon you all to join me, while I hail him General of the armies of Scotland, and Guardian of her rights." Caps, helmets, gauntlets, were thrown up, while the shouts of the approving Scots rent the air, and for the first time, they had observed it, a sort of timidity appeared in the countenance of Wallace, as he took off his helmet, and stood up beside his friend, that he might the better address the joyful crowd.

"My most gallant friends," said he, "not by me, but by you is this great battle gained; do not therefore raise me, in the heat of your great rejoicing, to a place which my youth and station unfit me for; there are nobler men to fill that lofty position. I am content to lead the faithful men around me, and to reign in the greenwood, as we have done, if need be, so long as life endureth. But pass we this! You must think again about this matter." (No, no, was loudly cried here). "I have more good

news for you all—known only to myself and a few more here. Lanark Castle is ours! taken this morning by our brave comrades!" Here again a loud shout interrupted him. "The burghers are our friends, so let us all move on to that neighbourhood, where I trust you will meet with some solace for your late hardships and privations." Another shout rent the air, and in short space the whole band was in motion, with the booty and captives towards the castle.

They were met by the burghers near the town, and hailed as deliverers; and as they neared the fortress, they saw the ensign of Wallace flaunting aloft. It had only been raised when they came in sight; for Stephen of Ireland had kept up the flag of England to deceive the flying Southron, who, he knew, would most likely seek refuge there; accordingly, he had taken several in that manner. As many crowded into the great hall as it could hold, but Wallace had disappeared. The chiefs, who were grouped together, nearly all of them hurt, as well as Murray, but too much excited to keep apart when such stirring events were going

on, conferred on the anxiety of Wallace, which they believed to be very great, concerning the Lady Marion. They had all heard of the Black Leech, and knowing Heselrig's feelings and his objects, they feared deeply for her safety.

"Men say," said Auchinleck, sinking his voice, "that he is the poisoning Monk of Crossraguel, well known in Ayrshire for many murders."

"Alas!" replied Douglas, "what but evil could chance to the poor child, so sore bested?"

Thus their conversation continued, the joy lately so exuberant having completely given place to a feeling of grief and depression for some time, when a shout arose in the hall, and they perceived Wallace making his way through the crowd; but what was their joy and surprise to behold, as he came nearer, a female figure leaning on his arm.

"The Lady Marion! the Lady Marion! joy to her!" rang loudly among the assembled warriors; and she moved among them as if she had lived in camps.

"Thank you all," cried she. "O how my heart thanks you!"

The vaulted roof again resounded, as they drank in every word uttered in her clear musical voice.

"My brave chiefs!" said Wallace, who was deeply moved by this scene.

They bowed to her; but she grasped the hand of the nearest, and eagerly kissed it. Then shaking hands with all,—"O! William Wallace! tell them," said she, "tell them how grateful I am, for I cannot!"

"All hath been done by him, lady," said Douglas. "He was the head, we but the feebler hands."

Wallace then presented every one separately to her, with a few words of compliment, varied with much taste and judgment, to suit the individual.

"And now," my friends, there is a wonderful tale to tell, for I see you all desire to know how my Marion hath escaped the snares of her enemies; but should we not rather reward, as we best can, those who deserve our gratitude more especially, for this day's success, before we inquire into other matters?"

"Surely," replied Murray; "but two things we would learn first,—What hath really been the fate of Cormack? He was not seen in the fight to-day. Is he a traitor? Dark doubts are still entertained of him; and others of us demand justice on that black villain, Galbraith, who hath been Heselrig's chief confidant for months."

"The Black Leech had never returned to the Castle," Wallace replied; "but for Cormack, thou shalt see him, my friends, and judge him."

Having so said, he stepped back a few paces, and brought forward the leader, who had that morning taken the Castle.

"Canst thou," enquired he, "inform me regarding Cormack? I think thou art able to do so, and to produce him too. But shew what thou art. Doff that knightly helm, to which thou hast no right."

It was removed, and to the astonishment of all, the face of the Black Leech was revealed.

"Saints of Heaven!" exclaimed Douglas, "what have we here? This cannot be the man who fought so bravely?"

"The Demon Leech hath destroyed him, and taken his armour," suggested others.

"True, true!" cried the rest, adopting this wild suggestion, and a turmoil ensued; for they would have seized the imagined culprit immediately; but the strong voice of their Chief arrested them.

"Hold, my friends!" said he, a smile playing on his features. "What! are ye, men of the greenwood, so accustomed to masquerading, amazed at this? Doff once again thy borrowed semblance, and stand forth as thou art, my friend and brother."

There was fresh amazement, and it soon reached its climax; for, at the word, off flew the black wig, beard, and eyebrows, and Cormack stood before them. Surprise kept all silent, as Wallace warmly embraced his henchman; but soon arose exclamations amidst the crowded hall, and every one pressed forward to gaze on the man who had so devotedly put his life in hazard, to preserve the lady of his lord. The whole scheme was comprehended at once.

Angus, who, like Wallace, had a private interview with his niece before they joined the rest, absolutely stared with astonishment; for, although expert in such disguises, and quick in detecting them, he had never suspected the Leech to be any thing but what he represented himself to be. Then grasping Cormack's hand, he warmly thanked him, "as," said he, "I dare say the lady hath long before this."

"Stand aside for a moment, brave Angus," said Douglas, "and let us all see this gallant fellow, who hath not only taken the first fortress for the liberators of Scotland, but hath made his abode in a tiger's den, at the risk of being torn to pieces on the first false step, to preserve the life and the honour of this noble lady. Such I believe to be some of his services. But, by my faith, these changes make one's head dizzy, and I scarcely know what to think!"

"All this, and much more hath he done noble Douglas," replied Wallace; "and I pray you all to remark the courage which could sustain him in such a place as this, and with such

a ruler. Is there any merit in mere fighting like this?"

All who were near pressed on Cormack with thanks and good wishes, which he received with that air of quiet simplicity that never left him. Every one was desirous of some special reward for him; but Douglas, who was in great spirits, as they all were, called out,—"Thou hast degraded him from the first rank of chivalry in jest, noble Wallace; and by my word, I shall see how he will brook the second in earnest. Carmichael, thy spurs!"

A 'squire advanced, and quickly unbuckled the articles; but Marion, who guessed the object, interfered.

"Sir William Douglas," said she, with a smile, "that is a lady's task, and right joyous am I to have the opportunity."

Then she knelt gracefully on the floor, and taking first one spur, and then the other, she buckled them on Cormack's heels, heedless of his remonstrances; and rising up, she looked round with a queenly air,—"Now," said she, aloud, "stand

thou forth, a gallant esquire; and sure I am, better or braver never followed true knight to the field."

Another shout of approbation followed.

"And take thou, my friend," said Douglas, "Black William's sword, in token of his warm approval."

And so saying, he loosened the belt, and with his own hand buckled it round him.

Every chief had some present for the favourite of the day, and every one regretted that they could not reward him sufficiently. Cormack was for a moment overcome by this singular display of kindness and approbation; but quickly regaining self-possession, he thus addressed the assemblage: —"Lords and Noble Chiefs, and ye my gallant comrades, I cannot tell how much I feel your kindness; it is far beyond my poor deserts in every thing, saving that I have been instrumental in preserving this peerless lady; and if I have placed myself in danger for that purpose, such as others like not, seeing it hath not the glory of the battle-field, I am amply repaid by her grateful acknow-

ledgements, and the approval of my master, to whom my life is devoted, without this excessive kindness on your part. But let me, without offence, say to all, and especially to thee, Noble Chief of Douglasdale, that no elevation of rank, such as that which your partiality has now conferred, shall cause me to quit the side of him who must ever be my lord and master."

"And so he shall, man," replied Douglas, smiling. "It was not meant that thou shouldst be other than 'Squire to our noble Chief; and though he be not yet a knight—for none save the first in the land is fit to confer that honour on him —thou mayest rest sure that he shall be so ere many months pass over."

"It was not that I meant," replied Cormack; "for, however much he may grace the golden spurs, they cannot elevate him. I desire simply to intimate to our band, that whether 'squire or yeoman, knight or noble, if it were possible, I serve no man but Wallace."

He spoke with firmness and resolution, and all were pleased with what he said. As for the pa-

triot Chief, it is difficult to tell whether he derived more gratification from this great triumph of his arms, than the applause so freely and unanimously bestowed on the follower to whom he was so much attached, and who was so devoted to him. But now their rejoicing must have an end, for nature demanded refreshment and repose; and, on the following day, every thing that remained untold was to be narrated, and their future proceedings agreed on.

CHAPTER XV.

All 's well that ends well still.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE tale which Cormack told to the Chiefs, who, although they easily guessed the general purport and object of his disguises, were desirous of hearing every particular, was simple enough. On quitting the Grange of Hilton, he directed his course to Lanark, where he soon learned not only where the lady was, but that she was ill, and required a physician. By the help of his friend in the burgh, he obtained one of those books of prescriptions which the monks (almost the only doctors of the period) had composed in their rude style, for the purpose of instructing each other in the mystery of an art, that, with them, was confined

to the exhibition of simple herbs of the field. It also contained some animadversions on the diabolical use of magic in removing disease, and thus made him acquainted with sundry terms used by the men who dealt in charms and incantations. Emboldened by this piece of good fortune, after a very short perusal of the work, he resolved to hazard his life, as the only means of saving the hapless lady from what he could not doubt would be the machinations of Heselrig.

The same kind friend remonstrated against this wilful throwing away of life, for he believed it impossible to keep up the deception; but, finding him resolute, he procured him the materials which so effectually disguised him. Cormack soon perceived the impression his gloomy aspect had made, and he improved it by his subsequent demeanour, aided by the mystery which attached to his turret, which he allowed no one to enter, the better to conceal every thing there. But he had some strange figures, which met the eye of any one who casually glanced into it. His first great object was to obtain power over Heselrig, so that he might be

intrusted with his secrets, and engaged as an agent. In this he succeeded perfectly; but he found it difficult to conceal the disgust which the barefaced villany of the man created, as we have seen. When he got permission to gather herbs at night, he repaired immediately to Wallace, and revealed his whole plan to him.

The latter strongly urged on him silence, and made him vow before him to tell the fact to no one; "for," said he, "a life like thine, my friend, is not to rest on a basis so unstable as man's discretion. I would trust the chief's you see around me with my own life; but thine is in my keeping alone, and to no one else shall it be intrusted; remember thy vow doth include all without exception."

"Save the Lady Marion," suggested Cormack.

But Wallace sternly refused to relax in what he considered the just interpretation of the pledge he had exacted; "because," said he, "it would not be prudent. Were she alone, and well and strong, as she was ere she entered that foul den, I would not hesitate, especially as it would ease her mind; but that simple maiden she hath with her must

know all. It would be impossible to tell aught, situated as they are, to the lady and not to the servant; and I could not peril thy life on such terms. Thou canst assure her, notwithstanding thy black looks, that thou art a friend, by word and demeanour; and I have such faith in thy powers, my Cormack, that I doubt not her mind shall soon become as tranquil as mine, which, praise be to God, is now as light as it was in the merry woods of Riccarton. Thou hast removed a load from it."

"Then there is much gained already," replied Cormack cheerfully; "and I doubt not I shall succeed with the Lady Marion also; at any rate, I shall watch over so that no evil can befall her—on that you may rely. I doubt not the dark ruler of the castle will practise on her, and select me as his instrument, and I am prepared for him."

We have seen how he succeeded in gaining the confidence of Heselrig, for the exhibition of the dew-gathered herbs, which were to place Marion in his power; and the various tricks of quackery made use of, to work on the minds of the garrison,

and through them on their captain. And in order to indnce the belief that he was capable of any crime, he himself revealed, in sundry dark hints to Folkham, which soon became widely disseminated as authentic, that he was no other than infamous character, well known in Carrick as the Poisoning Monk. On learning this part of his history, Heselrig believed that he might speak unreservedly, and he did so, so as almost to excite the ungovernable wrath of the right-minded Cormack; but he controlled himself, not sufficiently, however, to maintain his usual grave placidity of manner at all times, or to conceal the dislike he felt of him and his schemes.

The suspicious mind of Heselrig doubted every one, and he feared that he might set a watch over his proceedings in regard to this medicine, which was to have an effect so baneful; and he obtained a drug which would induce sleep, and cause the lady to keep much in bed, as if from weakness. This answered his purpose effectually. Marion was told by Wallace's consent on the evening before the battle, (when every thing had been concerted,

and there was little danger of the simple Dora being tampered with to reveal any thing, inadvertently, of the plot against her,) who the Black Leech really was. The very excitement of Dora shewed the prudence of having kept her in ignorance so long, and caused him to fear for the future. But her lady, after pouring out her whole grateful heart in thanks to Cormack, took upon herself the task of composing and controlling her handmaiden, and she succeeded, until, weak and worn with excitement, she sank into repose, when, as we have seen, Dora, unable to command herself, repaired to the outer court to learn if the projected attack was in progress.

This had been arranged by Wallace, who, through their common friend in the burgh, could communicate with Cormack at any hour. Stephen and his party were despatched during the night to the woods near the Castle, and their presence duly notified to Cormack, who, donning for the nonce the first suit of armour belonging to the Castle that came to his hand, over which he threw his black gown, got out as easily as usual. His encounter with

the three men of his own band on a previous occasion in Lanark, embarrassed him at first, but he perceived immediately that he must contrive to give them the alarm, as Heselrig, with a large retinue, was fast approaching; so he decided on a quarrel as the best means, and the result proved that he was in the right. He was equally embarrassed on the day when Wallace was hunted from the gates, and obliged to avert suspicion by being the first to report the discovery of the warders.

Cormack was now happy in the unmeasured applause of his countrymen, and happier still in the approbation of his master; but his mind reverted to the lone cottage at Hilton, and her he had left there, suffering and anxious on his account. We must now take a glance at the scene there, when the news of this crowning victory reached it. Simon had been often irritated by the obstinate unbelief of his daughter in Cormack's defection from the Patriots; and on every occasion, when this was manifested, he would insist that she should forget him forthwith, and never mention his name in his presence. The rumour of the battle reached him

long before the authentic account; and the name of Cormack was borne along with it as one of distinguished note, much to the astonishment of Simon, which had not subsided, when a yeoman from Loudon Castle arrived, brimful of the battle and all its particulars; and he delighted especially to dwell on the scene after it in the Castle Hall.

"Then," said he, "might be seen the great ones of the land, at one end of the hall, and the rest of it filled with the ordinary warriors, all gay with mirth, though many of them were smarting from wounds. Then comes me in one, whom no one knew, for his vizor was still down; but he it was who took that Castle, and who that day afterwards gave the first overthrow to the Southrons, and made a great man captive whose ransom will make him rich; who was that, thinkest thou, friend Simon?"

"I can guess," said Alice, her eyes sparkling, but her father merely stared. The yeoman went on.

"And our glorious Chief, in merry mood, bade him remove the knightly casque which belonged not

to him; and who was it, dost thou think,—but the Black Leech?"

The face of Alice became blank, and Simon found his tongue.

"I thought so, wench; thou art ever harping on the wrong string; but how came the Leech to be so stout a warrior, trow?"

The yeoman went on without answering.

"And our Chief called out another time. Doff yet again thy masquerade, and stand forth my friend and brother. Trow ye who it was, Simon?"

"Cormack!" cried Alice in ecstasy, rising up and clasping her hands. "Cormack, and no other!"

"And Cormack it was!" replied the yeoman; "and if thou hadst seen how every one there vied to honour him, thou wouldest have thought, Simon of Hilton, that even Wallace himself was less esteemed than his slave-born henchman. He had perilled his life as if it had been nothing, to preserve the Lady Marion; he had lived with Heselrig for long, exposed to the risk hourly of the most horrible torments, if detected; he had aided his

Chief at the time in maturing his plans, which have ended in this great victory; and she smiled so sweetly on him, and shook his hand so kindly, and then buckled on his spurs so charmingly, that every one was delighted."

"Buckled on his spurs!" ejaculated Simon, whose senses seemed to be fairly conglomerated by the astounding intelligence. The yeoman went on.

"The great Lord of Douglas took the spurs from a 'squire, and she put them on; then he took the sword from his own side, and fastened it round Cormack, saying,—'Take the sword of Douglas that was never yet drawn in a wrong quarrel.' And the lady called out, looking so beautiful and so grand,—'Now go forth an Esquire, and braver or better ne'er fought on stricken field.' And there was such shouting! it was enough to startle the burghers of Lanark." This last announcement took away Simon's breath—vox faucibus hæsit; he stared some seconds as if suffering from an inward ailment. At last some ejaculations escaped him,—"Stand forth an Esquire!

—blessed Saints! what will things come to?" The strange yeoman either heeded him not, or pretended not to observe him, and continued his tale. "Then every lord who was present gave him some token of esteem, one armour, another a horse, and so on; and he told them all at last, for I think he began to fear they had some design on him; that if they made a lord of him, he would never leave his master."

"Did he,—did he?" cried Simon; "then he is the same good lad still."

"Surely he is," said Alice; "I never thought he was aught else."

But Simon was yet in a maze, the good luck of Cormack being evidently of difficult comprehension, for he continued to ejaculate, "Blessed Mary! Holy Virgin!" and at last he asked, "Sawest thou the 'Squire?"

"Mean you Cormack? Surely we all saw him, for he came among us, after the lords had done with him, and was just the same frank merry comrade, and told us all, though the sons of serfs, not to be faint-hearted, for William Wallace was de-

termined to uplift the down-trodden and exalt them; and truly he is a type of it, for he is already great and rich. Men say the Douglas hath given him lands, for that doughty lord was quite taken with him."

"Glory must be rendered to God," said Simon; "assuredly, his power is great to work miracles! But this passeth! A serf! a red towsie-headed serf! scarce twelve months agone; and now, doubtless, he will have coat armour, and the son of his oe shall be a gentleman of birth and blood!"

As he spoke, he rose and paced about uneasily for a short time; then casting a sorrowful look on his daughter, he sighed profoundly.

She perceived that her hour of triumph was come, for she never a moment doubted the constancy of Cormack, and was consequently in a state of great inward exultation; but she returned her father's glance with one equally lugubrious, and shaking her head dolefully—"Alas, dear father, what a mistake thou hast made! Hadst thou not commanded me to forget him, what a happy father thou mightst have been now!" The stranger

seemed desirous to assist in her project; for he remarked immediately that any gentlewoman of high blood would now think him a match for her. And she went on—"I always told thee thou wert wrong, but thou wouldst break my heart, rather than let me have one so deserving; and now must I be an old maid and lead apes all along, if thee and our lord, no wiser than thyself."

Simon was fairly beaten, and hung his head in despondency, as he replied,—"It is true, child; I cannot gainsay thee; and our lord, who is ever thought wise, hath been wrong like myself—that is my only consolation."

"And to think," continued she, "what a companion thou hast lost! And what a listener!—one who never got up and went away in the middle of Largs' fight like some others, or any tale of thine, however long, and who could himself talk so about battles and sieges."

"Nay," replied Simon, rather stung; "there be plenty who love to listen to Largs' fight, and plenty to save mine estate of yeomanry also."

"Never think it, my father," said she, energe-

tically; "I shall marry no man but Cormack; him thou hast kept from me. Another thou shalt not bestow." And she quitted the apartment, leaving Simon to the consolation of his visitor.

Alice went forthwith to the place where her maidens were at work, plying the distaff or some other household thrift, and taking Agnes aside, she poured out the fulness of her heart into that faithful bosom, and the kind handmaiden rejoiced with her mistress. "Thou shalt wend with me, dear Agnes," said she; "for I know thou wouldst not choose to part from me. But not as a bondsmaid; no, my Agnes, thou shalt be free and happy, as the merle that doth hop from spray to spray, and warble all the while."

Agnes bathed her hand with tears as she clasped and kissed it, and it was sometime ere she could give utterance to her thoughts. But at length she said, "If freedom hath such effect on me, who have ever been kindly used, what must be its influence on those who escape from thraldom to harsh masters? It is therein, dear mistress, that the

evil lurks—the serf cannot change a bad for a good lord."

"Thou speakest truth; for the poor freeman who lacketh food and raiment is worse off than the serf, who must ever be fed and clothed, even for his master's sake. It is the confinement—the tie to one person's will and pleasure that constitutes the misery of slavery."

"Ah, mistress," said Agnes through her tears—a new train of ideas occurring to her—"the brave Cormack is a proof that serfs have but to be made freemen to enable them to match the best of the land! Did I not foresee that such would be his case?"

"Thou didst, Agnes; and thy kind heart will rejoice to know that many lords have given freedom to their serfs, at the instance of Scotland's glorious young hero, who doth labour especially for them."

"Oh, blessings be upon him! Thousands and thousands will be called down on that noble head; and all after ages shall hallow the place where his footsteps strayed!" cried Agnes, enthusiastically.

"Thou art in the right, my girl; and Edward of England shall find that Wallace, by his wise and humane policy, shall raise up many Cormacks against him," said Alice.

"Said I not so?" cried Agnes. "The very babes, the most fearful maidens, would fight for liberty! And shall not men, whose hearts are strong, and whose frames are inured to hardships, war with their oppressors, even to the end of life, for it?"

"Surely," replied Alice, with a smile, "no man need woo thee who would not, for I think thou wouldst take spear in hand on small persuasion, in this quarrel."

Agnes was recalled to herself by the observation, and their conversation afterwards related to matters more congenial to female minds.

Simon meanwhile had, in his great anxiety to learn every particular regarding the battle, for a moment almost forgotten the success of his old friend Cormack. The yeoman now with him had followed one of the Crawfords to the field, who, elated by the signal good fortune of his party, had

thrown prudence aside, and come straight to Loudon with his followers. This much he had told Simon, after answering his many questions, when the latter inquired what his old lord said to it.

"Truly, I saw him not, but one who was in the hall at the time, doth declare, that he was like a man wild with joy, for he swore it was the best news he had heard since the day of Allanton, and threw down his gauntlet as if defying the Southron; men think he will keep measure no longer, for he swore by Longus?"

"Thorlongus, friend," replied Simon, with a grave shake of the head, "and a great oath it is!—one which no Crawford may use rashly. In the heat of anger it doth sometimes escape our old lord when it might be omitted, but lightly made or not he will keep it."

"Then look to shake thy spear once again in a Southron face, Simon of Hilton; for surely I believe the oath hath been taken."

"For that I am speedily ready, and I care not how soon it be."

"But who may this Thorlongus be?"

"If thou wert the regular follower of a Crawford that question were needless; but thou art yet a stranger among us, though not to me. Know then, he was the common ancestor of the race, a Dane of Northumberland, and a great man, as chronicles tell. Thou dost remind me of old tales. The sire of our present lord was wont to swear by his ancestor too, and his menye knew well that then was no time for joking. The Knight of Kerse, who is now an old man too, like the rest of us, was then a gay and merry youngster, as his son is now; he would say, 'Take heed, gallants!—Long Tor hath come forth;' meaning that his lord was angry, and had sworn by Thorlongus; and, once upon a time, he overheard the lad, and without more ado, he felled him with the butt of his lance, saying, 'Long Tor is here, sirrah; take that to teach thee reverence for the name of thine ancestor.' Ah! a fell old carle was the last Lord of Loudon; but a just man and a stout warrior. Yet this young kinsman doth seem to eclipse all his kindred."

"Eclipse!—I tell thee, Simon, Scotland never

had such a champion! I saw him through most of the fight, and, trust me, wherever he went, the enemies gave way before his single arm, as an he had been the best schiltron ever formed. That Southron knight whom our foes relied on so much, when he encountered him, was no more in his hands than a child of ten years would be in mine. Oh, his like was never seen!"

Simon's patriotism was fairly roused, and his enthusiasm rose to a high pitch, during which, all minor considerations given to the winds, he invoked blessings on Wallace, and all the heroes around him, not forgetting even Cormack.

"Ah, Simon!" said his friend, who, like the rest of the Loudon band, was inclined to laugh at the worthy yeoman's pride of place, and loved to tease him; "what a loss thou hast had in that good and brave lad. Methinks thy conscience must smite thee, and thou wilt acknowledge thyself justly punished by the disappointment thou now dost feel."

"Truly," replied Simon, wincing a little, yet unwilling to own that he was wrong. "We can-

not ever foretell what is to happen; and had I been gifted with that faculty, I will not deny but I might have acted differently; but thou wouldst not expect that I should give my bairn, with the tocher of a well-born gentlewoman, to a serf."

"But he was serf no longer, and was known, both for a stout warrior and henchman to our Chief, besides being a man of great ingine."

"I must tell thee, friend," said Simon, rather displeased, "that good blood flows in the veins of this maiden, whom thou wouldst hand over to the slave-born, as if a chattel like himself."

"I tell thee he is a chattel no longer, but an officer in the army of Scotland, and of high consideration."

"And I say unto thee, that if he be, he is no more now than a match for my daughter, and that he was not so before."

"Well! pride will have a fall! Thou shalt feel humbled when Cormack weds a dame of a noble house, as men say he will."

This gratuitous piece of information, coined for the nonce, terminated their conversation; and

they parted, not particularly pleased with each other.

The effect of this victory was not more vividly made manifest in the person of Sir Ranald Crawford, than in that of almost every man of note in Scotland. All eyes had been, for many weeks, turned towards Wallace and his foresters; and now the fear that had previously restrained them, of want of strength to cope with their powerful enemy, vanished entirely, in the shouts which the news raised wherever they travelled. The national spirit was fully up, and that love of independence which has always characterized the people, rose from beneath the crushing load of Edward's tyranny, with a spring which was irresistible. But we must not anticipate what is to be narrated in the second part of his history; and we must now, for a brief space, take leave of our leading characters, after the fashion of such chroniclers.

The Lord Piercy had not found the death he courted in the field. Hurried along, almost frantic, by his faithful followers, he reached his horses;

and taking the road to Glasgow, escaped from the eager pursuit, only to be tortured by the shame of defeat, when he had relied on a great and effectual victory, which would set the crown of Scotland firmly on his master's head, and raise himself to the first rank among his subjects. Bitter were his reflections as he pondered on the vanity of human ambition, and the nothingness of a politician's wisdom, when they could both be baffled and set at naught by a beardless youth. He did not dare to repair at once to his castle in Northumberland, which he would fain do, resigning power and command, along with all hope of again winning his sovereign's favour; but the wrath of the latter would be altogether implacable if he moved until the full measure of his anger had been poured out on him. With agony, therefore, such as few, who were ground down beneath the iron power of his policy, had endured, he awaited his doom; and it came at length, in a cold, haughty, brief order to resign his command into the hands of Cressingham, and come to England forthwith to answer for his conduct; and the proud lord obeyed this humili-

ating mandate, scarcely knowing whether the doom of a traitor—the gallows and quartering axe—did not await him.

His chief followers shared in his misfortune. Some fell in the battle, and among them was Featherstone. Senhouse was treated with that chivalrous courtesy which distinguished Wallace and his party, and he soon departed for his native country, whence he transmitted the ransom which the custom of the times required of him to pay, and which made Cormack rich, even for his new rank, when added to the gifts of his powerful Scottish friends. Folkham recovered of his wounds, and continued in the household of his lord at Alnwick. Sir Richard Ridley bore his part bravely in the fight, and being severely wounded, escaped with difficulty; but it was said he availed himself of the weakness arising from his hurts to retire to England, being disgusted with the nature of the war.

The Scottish Lords and Chiefs assembled at Lanark continued together for several days, during which they were joined by many men of note, and grave deliberations were held on their future course.

Wallace strongly urged the necessity for getting possession of fortified places without delay, and they coincided with him in this opinion. It was not likely, therefore, that they would remain long inactive. In the meantime Wallace resolved, among his most familiar friends, and with their approbation, to espouse his betrothed bride in the most private and unostentatious manner; and Cormack, who had by this time been at Hilton, modestly insinuated the wish of himself and his bride that they might also be united on the same day. "Thou art still even with me, in all things, Cormack," said his Chief, gaily; "and truly, Sir 'Squire, thy constancy doth merit reward; for, sooth to tell, my friend Simon deserved other return."

"Yea," replied Cormack, in the same strain, "but I do not marry Simon, and I care not what he may think. After all, he was not far wrong."

"Thou wert ever too modest, my friend," replied Wallace, more gravely. "In this bustling world thou must set a more proper value on thyself, or, trust me, it will take thee at thine own estimate, or somewhat lower, it may be."

The ceremony was witnessed by only a few of the Chiefs of the Scottish host; and it was remarked by all, that no man on the occasion carried his head higher, or looked more completely happy, than old Simon of Hilton.

THE END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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